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Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*

Twenty-second session

* The present document is the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the work of its twenty-second session. The final report will be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/55/38) and will include the report of the Committee on its twenty-third session (A/55/38 (Part II)).

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Letter of transmittal

19 April 2000

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, according to which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, established pursuant to the Convention, "shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities".

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its twenty-second session from 17 January to 4 February 2000 at United Nations Headquarters. It adopted its report on the session at the 466th meeting, on 4 February 2000. The report of the Committee is herewith submitted to you for transmission to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Aída **González Martínez**
Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Matters brought to the attention of States parties

A. Statement of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the legal framework for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the links between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Platform for Action

1. The Convention, which has now been in force for over 18 years, has been ratified by 165 States to date. It is the only international instrument to set forth the human rights standards for women and girls in the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural areas of both public and private life. It is widely known as "the Women's Convention".

2. Many nations that have ratified the Convention have integrated it into their constitutional and legislative framework. It therefore has significance for women in the fields of both domestic and international law and has been influential in the formulation and implementation of government policy and in the development of the domestic jurisprudence that has advanced the human rights of women in all regions of the world.

3. The Convention and the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing are closely connected. The Convention's rights and provisions encompass all areas of concern set forth in the Platform for Action and its monitoring process enables the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to ensure compliance with both the Platform for Action and the Convention. It is the only international instrument that provides both the legal framework for the Platform for Action and the means by which it may be realized.

4. One concrete outcome of the recommendations of the Platform for Action was the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Since it was opened for signature, ratification and accession on 10 December 1999, 24 States parties have signed it and a number of others have indicated that they will act for early ratification. Upon the entry into force of the Optional Protocol, the Committee will be responsible for implementing this important new international instrument. By this means too, the Platform for Action will continue to be monitored.

5. The Convention and the monitoring process established under it will play a crucial role in ensuring that the goals of the Platform for Action, as well as any fresh initiatives which emerge from the special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", to be convened in June 2000, will be achieved.

B. Decisions

Decision 22/I
Reports of States parties

The Committee decided that the Chairperson should address letters to those States parties that have not submitted two or more reports required under article 18 of the Convention recalling their treaty obligations in this regard.

Decision 22/II
List of issues and questions of the pre-session working group

The Committee decided that the list of issues and questions formulated by the pre-session working group on States parties whose reports are under consideration and the responses of those States thereto should be circulated to experts prior to the session at which the reports are to be examined.

Decision 22/III
Provision of information by States parties

The Committee decided that States parties presenting reports that wish to provide additional information through audio-visual or electronic means, including video, film and slides, should inform the Committee through the Secretariat of their intention to do so at least one month in advance of the presentation of their reports to the Committee.

Decision 22/ IV
Pre-session working group

The Committee decided that in drawing up the list of issues and questions with regard to periodic reports, the pre-session working group should formulate a short list of questions and issues focusing, if possible, on major areas of concern in regard to implementation of the Convention by States parties.

Chapter II
Organizational and other matters

A. States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

6. On 4 February 2000, the closing date of the twenty-second session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there were 165 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York in March 1980. In accordance with article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

7. A list of States parties to the Convention will be contained in annex I of part two of the report of the Committee for 2000 (A/55/38 (Part II)). A list of States parties that have accepted the amendment to article 20 (I) of the Convention will be contained in annex II of the same report

B. Opening of the session

8. The Committee held its twenty-second session at United Nations Headquarters, from 17 January to 4 February 2000. The Committee held 22 plenary meetings (445th-466th), and held 18 working group meetings.

9. The session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Aída González Martínez (Mexico), who had been elected at the twentieth session of the Committee in January 1999.

10. Addressing the Committee, Ms. Angela E. V. King, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, informed the Committee that, on 6 October 1999, the plenary of the General Assembly had adopted resolution 54/4 in which it adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been finalized in March 1999 by the Open-ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Special Adviser stated that the adoption of the Optional Protocol by the Assembly represented the translation into reality of the commitments of the international community at both the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

11. Ms. King also informed the Committee that, on 10 December 1999, the Optional Protocol had been opened for signature, ratification and accession and that 23 States had signed the Optional Protocol. Since then, she said, a further State had signed the Protocol, bringing the total number of signatories to 24. The Convention and the Optional Protocol, and their significance for women, were the focus of a panel discussion in which the Secretary-General participated. Other participants in the panel were: Aloisia Wörgetter, Chairperson of the open-ended working group on the optional protocol; Bacre Waly Ndiaye, Director of the New York office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Sujata Manohar, former judge of the Supreme Court of India; Fauzjia Kassindja, Equality Now; and Aída González Martínez, Chairperson of the Committee. Also, a joint statement on the Optional Protocol by the Special Adviser and Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was issued.

12. The Special Adviser informed the Committee that, since the twenty-first session of the Committee two States, the Niger and Tuvalu, had become party to the Convention, bringing the number of States parties to 165. She also informed the Committee that the Secretary-General had written to all States that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention, requesting them to consider doing so before the end of 2000. She also informed the Committee of several of the activities she had undertaken to encourage ratification and acceptance of the Convention and the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention. She noted that

currently only 23 States parties had accepted the amendment, the most recent being Turkey on 9 December 1999.

13. The Special Adviser described some of the activities concerning the Convention and the Committee undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women since the twenty-first session. These included the Judicial Colloquium on the application of international human rights law at the domestic level, which had been held at the United Nations Office at Vienna to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A subregional training workshop on preparing initial reports required under the Convention had taken place in Cotonou in July 1999 and had been attended by nine countries in francophone Africa, most of which had not presented initial reports.

14. Turning to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century", to be held in June 2000, the Special Adviser highlighted the preparatory meetings convened by the regional commissions. She also informed the Committee that she had attended two such meetings, including the sixth African Regional Conference on Women to assess progress in the implementation of the Beijing and Dakar Platforms for Action, held from 22 to 26 November 1999 in Addis Ababa, and the Arab Conference on Integrated Follow-up to the United Nations Global Conferences, held from 29 November to 1 December 1999 in Beirut. Ms. Carolyn Hannan, a principal officer in the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, attended, on behalf of the Special Adviser, the high-level intergovernmental meetings to review the regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, held from 26 to 29 October 1999 in Bangkok. The meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which was held from 17 to 21 January 2000 to assess implementation of the Platform for Action, was attended by Yakin Ertürk, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Special Adviser indicated that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) would meet for the same purpose early in February 2000.

C. Attendance

15. All members of the Committee attended the twenty-second session, with the exception of Ms. Carlota Bustelo and Ms. Carmel Shalev. Ms. Emna Aouij attended from 17 to 28 January; Ms. Naela Gabr attended from 24 to 28 January; Ms. Rosalyn Hazelle attended from 17 to 26 January; Ms. Anne Lise Ryel attended from 18 to 26 January; and Ms. Kongit Sinegiorgis attended from 24 January to 4 February 2000.

16. A list of the members of the Committee indicating their terms of office, will appear in annex III of part two of the report of the Committee for 2000 (A/55/38 (Part II)).

D. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

17. The Committee considered the provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2000/I/1) at its 445th meeting, on 19 January 2000. The agenda as adopted was as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the Committee.
4. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
5. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
6. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.
7. Provisional agenda for the twenty-third session.
8. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its twenty-second session.

E. Report of the pre-session working group

18. The Committee had decided, at its ninth session,[1] to convene a pre-session working group for five days before each session to prepare lists of issues and questions relating to periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at the session. The pre-session working group for the twenty-second session of the Committee was held from 28 June to 2 July 1999.

19. The following members representing different regional groups participated in the working group: Ms. Salma Khan (Asia and the Pacific); Ms. Ivanka Corti (Europe); and Ms. Rosalyn Hazelle (Latin America and the Caribbean).

20. The working group prepared lists of issues and questions relating to the reports of four States parties, namely, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Germany and Luxembourg.

21. At the 447th meeting on 19 January 2000, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group, Ms. Salma Khan, introduced the report of the group (CEDAW/C/1999/II/CRP.1 and Add.1-4).

F. Composition and organization of work of the working groups

22. At its 445th meeting, on 19 January 2000, the Committee decided to take up issues under agenda items 5 (Implementation of article 21 of the Convention) and 6 (Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee) as a working group of the whole. The issues that it decided to consider were the revised rules of procedure of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38* and corrigendum (A/45/38 and Corr.1), paras. 28-31.

Chapter III
Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the Committee

23. Reporting on her activities since the last session of the Committee, Ms. Aída González Martínez, Chairperson of the Committee, indicated that she had attended a workshop organized by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on possible indicators of civil and political rights. Discussion at the workshop centred on possible indicators of human rights within the framework of three areas, which included administration of justice, democracy and participation and personal security. The workshop was attended by 19 persons, among them experts from academic institutions; the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; a member of the Committee against Torture; members of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights; and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, as well as experts on human rights.

24. The Chairperson had attended the Third Committee of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and made a statement during the discussion of the agenda item entitled "Advancement of women". She informed the Committee that the adoption of the Optional Protocol on 6 October 1999 by the Assembly was a step forward not only for the Committee, but also for women at large. The Chairperson noted that, during the debate of the Third Committee, most delegations had expressed support for the work of the Committee.

25. The Chairperson informed the Committee that she had forwarded a message to the Judicial Colloquium held in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the tenth anniversary of the adoption by the Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The message had been read by Ms. Emna Aouij, a member of the Committee, who was keynote speaker at the Colloquium.

26. The Chairperson informed the Committee that she had participated in the special signing ceremony of the Optional Protocol that took place on 10 December 1999 and in the round table held on the same day, with the participation of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, where the implications and the scope of the Optional Protocol and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were discussed. She indicated that among the issues she had highlighted in her presentation was the Committee's need for additional resources to effectively fulfil its responsibilities, as outlined in the Optional Protocol, in particular the professional staff needed to study and analyse communications and relevant national legislation.

27. The Chairperson concluded by noting the growing influence of the Convention and the Committee, as reflected in different meetings and events that had taken place in the reporting period. In particular, she drew attention to the Workshop on the Convergence and Divergence between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Islamic Law (Sharia) organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which took place in November 1999. She indicated that the Committee had been represented at this workshop by its Rapporteur, Ms. Ayse Feride Açar, whose participation had been commended by the organizers.

Chapter IV
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

A. Introduction

28. At its twenty-second session, the Committee considered the reports of eight States parties submitted under article 18 of the Convention: two initial reports; the initial and second reports of one States party; the initial and second and third periodic reports of one State party; one combined second and third periodic report; the combined second and third periodic report and fourth periodic report of one State party; and two third periodic reports.

29. As decided at its thirteenth session in 1994, the Committee prepared concluding comments on each report considered. The Committee's concluding comments on each State party, as prepared by the members of the Committee, and a summary of the introductory presentations by the representatives of the States parties are provided below.

B. Consideration of reports of States parties

1. Initial reports

India

30. The Committee considered the initial report of India (CEDAW/C/IND/1) at its 452nd, 453rd and 462nd meetings, on 24 and 31 January 2000 (CEDAW/C/SR.452, 453 and 462).

Introduction by the State party

31. The representative informed the Committee that India had ratified the Convention in July 1993 with two declarations and one reservation. She indicated that the preparation of the report had been preceded by wide-ranging consultations with a number of women's organizations. She noted that India had ratified a number of international human rights instruments and that the Indian Constitution prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as providing for affirmative action for women. India had initiated a consultative process in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women and was among the first countries to unreservedly accept the Beijing Platform for Action.

32. The representative indicated that among recent achievements in the implementation of the Convention had been the establishment, in March 1997, of a parliamentary committee on the empowerment of women, and the passage of constitutional amendments to reserve for women 33.33 per cent of the seats in the *Panchayati Raj* institutions at the local self-government level in rural areas and municipalities in urban areas. She also stated that a bill had been introduced in late 1999 which would reserve not less than one third of the total number of seats filled by direct elections in the *Lok Sabha* (House of the People) and State Legislative Assemblies for women.

33. The representative described the national machinery for women's advancement coordinated by the Department of Women and Child Development, which is headed by a cabinet minister assisted by a

minister of state. The National Commission for Women, established in 1992, served as a statutory ombudsperson for women, while the Central Social Welfare Board networked with nearly 12,000 women's NGOs. Institutional mechanisms for women's advancement also existed at state level. The representative highlighted the ninth five-year plan (1997-2002), which had identified the empowerment of women as a strategy for development and mandated early finalization of a national policy on empowerment of women. She indicated that, pending the adoption of the national policy, many mechanisms identified therein had already been put in place. Recently, the Prime Minister's Office had directed that a review be made of the impact of gender mainstreaming in ministries and departments.

34. The representative indicated that progressive legislation to promote the interests of women existed at both state and central levels, and that the Government had tasked the National Council of Women to oversee the implementation of constitutional and legal safeguards for women. The review of 39 laws was underway; recommendations for amendments, including those with regard to the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, had been submitted; and a draft bill on violence against women had been prepared. *Lok adalats* (people's courts) and *parivarik mahila lok adalats* (family women's courts) had been established to provide less formal systems of justice delivery. India had a tradition of public interest litigation and the Supreme Court had issued landmark judgements, including on sexual harassment at the work place and child prostitution. Several training institutes had also introduced gender sensitization training for judicial officials.

35. The representative described steps that had been taken to revise curricula and textbooks from a gender perspective, and the efforts of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to ensure projection of positive images of women in the media. Measures to address prostitution and trafficking in women had included a proposal to amend the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act to widen its scope and increase penalties; the appointment of special police officers; and the establishment of protective homes and child development and child-care centres for the children of sex workers. A plan of action to combat trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of women and children and to integrate victims into society had been developed, and India had actively participated in the drafting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

36. The representative indicated that, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, India had committed itself to increasing investment in education to 6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), but that the target had not been achieved to date although the overall growth in literacy among women had been higher than that of men in recent years. Intensive efforts to address gender differentials in literacy and education were continuing and included the establishment of girls' learning centres to meet the needs of girls who were unable to gain access to formal education.

37. The representative informed the Committee that International Labour Organization (ILO) standards were reflected in Indian labour laws and the Government had been seeking to extend maternity benefits to all women and to provide child care for working women. Guidelines for employers with respect to sexual harassment had been established in a Supreme Court judgement and legislation reflecting those guidelines was being prepared. Efforts to recognize women's work in the informal sector and reflect it in the national census and to provide workers in the sector with labour protection had been initiated.

38. Significant improvements in women's health had been achieved in the last decade, although the high maternal mortality ratio remained a concern. The recently launched reproductive and child health programme sought to address women's health in a holistic manner. Measures to address HIV/AIDS had been introduced and legislative and other strategies to confront female infanticide and sex-selective abortion had also been adopted.

39. The representative indicated that rural women constituted almost 80 per cent of the female population and reported that the Government had introduced quotas and women-specific schemes to ensure that they received an equal share in rural development and agricultural programmes.

40. The personal laws of the major religious communities had traditionally governed marital and family relations, with the Government maintaining a policy of non-interference in such laws in the absence

of a demand for change from individual religious communities. However, the Family Courts Act, providing that family matters, such as marriage and maintenance, came within the jurisdiction of the family courts, which incorporated informal procedures and counselling services, had been adopted. The representative drew attention to legislation concerning dowry-related violence and the provision of the Penal Code and Evidence Act regarding cruelty to a wife by her husband or his relatives.

41. In conclusion, the representative emphasized India's determined, concrete and sustained efforts to eliminate poverty and social disability and empower the poor and vulnerable.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

42. The Committee welcomes the submission of the initial report of India. While noting that the report conforms to the Committee's guidelines, it does not provide adequate information relating to implementation of some articles and the general issue of violence against women. The Committee further notes that the report was submitted with some delay. The report also does not contain information on measures taken to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. The Committee appreciates the detailed written and oral responses of the delegation during the consideration of the report, which provided important additional information.

43. The Committee notes that the report and the oral and written responses do not provide adequate statistical data, disaggregated by sex and the States of the Union and information on the implementation of affirmation action measures for scheduled castes.

44. The Committee notes with concern that the Government does not intend to review the declarations entered to article 16 (1) and 16 (2) of the Convention.

Positive aspects

45. The Committee recognizes that India has guaranteed in its Constitution fundamental human rights that can be enforced by an application to the Supreme Court. The Committee commends in particular the recognition of a fundamental right to gender equality and non-discrimination and a specific enabling provision on affirmative action in the Constitution.

46. The Committee appreciates the contribution made by the Supreme Court of India in developing the concept of social action litigation and a jurisprudence integrating the Convention into domestic law by interpreting Constitutional provisions on gender equality and non-discrimination.

47. The Committee commends the introduction of a range of policies and programmes by the Governments of India over the years to improve the situation of women. It notes with appreciation that those programmes have contributed to some extent to improving the quality of social indicators for women in various States of the Union. The Committee welcomes the proposal to formulate a new gender empowerment policy and the directives sent from the Prime Minister's office to mainstream gender issues and a rights approach to development at the national level.

48. The Committee commends the Government of India for establishing the National Commission for Women and state commissions for women with responsibility for developing action plans on gender and proposals for law reform.

49. The Committee commends the Government for introducing affirmative action measures that have enabled 33 per cent of seats in local government bodies to be reserved for women. It welcomes the proposed bill to reserve 33 per cent seats in state and national assemblies for women, and the assurance in the oral presentations that 30 to 40 per cent coverage will be provided for women in programmes that give access to credit.

50. The Committee commends the Government for introducing legislation that has banned sex-selective abortions. It welcomes the amendments to the law on nationality, which confer equal rights on men and women.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

51. The Committee notes that India has a very large and mainly rural population living in absolute poverty and that the feminization of poverty and growing income disparities prevent the benefits of economic development being transferred to women.

52. The Committee considers that widespread poverty, such social practices as the caste system and son preference, as reflected in a high incidence of violence against women, significant gender disparities and an adverse sex ratio, present major obstacles to the implementation of the Convention.

53. The Committee notes that the existence of regional disparities is an impediment to the effective implementation of the Convention.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

54. The Committee notes that the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action have not been integrated into policy planning and programmes. While there have been several national plans in the pre and post-Beijing period, the Committee notes that these adopt a welfare approach towards women.

55. The Committee recommends that the proposed gender empowerment policy integrate the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action and a rights-based approach.

56. The Committee considers that inadequate allocation of resources for women's development in the social sector and inadequate implementation of laws are serious impediments to the realization of women's human rights in India.

57. The Committee urges the allocation of sufficient and targeted resources for women's development in the social sector, as well as full implementation of relevant laws.

58. The Committee notes that there are many gaps in the legislative framework. The Committee considers that there is an urgent need to introduce comprehensive legislative reform to promote equality and the human rights of women.

59. The Committee recommends that proposals of the National Commission of Women on law reform be used in preparing new legislation and that the Commission be entrusted with the task of developing working papers on legal reform in critical areas, within a time-frame.

60. The Committee notes that steps have not been taken to reform the personal laws of different religious and ethnic groups, in consultation with them, so as to conform with the Convention. The Committee is concerned that the Government's policy of non-intervention perpetuates sexual stereotypes, son preference and discrimination against women.

61. The Committee urges the Government to withdraw its declaration to article 16 (1) of the Convention and to work with and support women's groups as members of the community in reviewing and reforming these personal laws. The Committee also calls upon the Government to follow the directive principles in the Constitution and Supreme Court decisions and enact a uniform civil code which different ethnic and religious groups may adopt.

62. The Committee is concerned that India has not yet established a comprehensive and compulsory system of registration of births and marriages. The Committee notes that inability to prove those important events by documentation prevents effective implementation of laws that protect girls from sexual exploitation and trafficking, child labour and forced or early marriage. The Committee is also concerned that failure to register marriages may also prejudice the inheritance rights of women.

63. The Committee calls upon the Government to provide adequate resources and establish a system of compulsory registration of births and monitor implementation in cooperation with women's groups and local bodies. It urges the Government to withdraw the declaration to article 16 (2) of the Convention.

64. The Committee is concerned that the fundamental right to education under the Constitution recognized by the Supreme Court has not been realized by providing girls with access to primary and secondary education. It notes that budgetary allocation for education is still far below India's commitment with regard to the Beijing Platform for Action.

65. The Committee urges the Government to take affirmative action, set a time-frame and provide adequate resources for primary and secondary education so as to give girls equal access to education and eradicate adult illiteracy among women. It calls upon the Government to make primary and secondary education compulsory by introducing and enforcing relevant regulations.

66. The Committee is concerned that the fundamental rights recognized in the Constitution can be enforced only against state actors and in the event of inaction on the part of the state. It also notes that the private sector,

where a great number of women are employed, which is expanding in a period of transition to market economic policies, is not covered by Constitutional standards.

67. The Committee recommends that a sex discrimination act be introduced to make the standards of the Convention and the Constitution applicable to non-state action and inaction.

68. The Committee is concerned that there is a high incidence of gender-based violence against women, which takes even more extreme forms because of customary practices, such as dowry, *sati* and the devadasi system. Discrimination against women who belong to particular castes or ethnic or religious groups is also manifest in extreme forms of physical and sexual violence and harassment.

69. The Committee urges the Government to implement existing legislation prohibiting such practices as dowry, devadasi and caste-based discrimination. It calls upon the Government to strengthen law enforcement and introduce reforms proposed by the National Commission on Women and women activists in regard to the law on rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence.

70. The Committee recommends that a national plan of action be developed to address the issue of gender-based violence in a holistic manner, in line with the Committee's general recommendations 19 and 24. It calls upon the Government to provide statistics and information on violence against women in its next report.

71. The Committee is concerned that women are exposed to the risk of high levels of violence, rape, sexual harassment, humiliation and torture in areas where there are armed insurrections.

72. The Committee recommends a review of prevention of terrorism legislation and the Armed Forces Special Provisions Act, in consultation with the Human Rights Commission of India, the National Commission of Women and civil society, so that special powers given to the security forces do not prevent the investigation and prosecution of acts of violence against women in conflict areas and during detention and arrest. The Committee recommends that women be given an opportunity to make their contribution to peaceful conflict resolution.

73. The Committee recommends the introduction of gender sensitization and human rights programmes for the police, the security forces and medical professionals, in addition to programmes already undertaken.

74. The Committee is concerned with the continuing discrimination, including violence, suffered by women of the Dalit community, despite the passage of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (prevention of atrocities) Act of 1989.

75. The Committee urges the Government to enforce laws preventing discrimination against Dalit women and prohibiting the devadasi system. It urges the Government to introduce affirmative action programmes in such areas as education, employment and health so as to provide life chances to Dalit women and girls and create an environment conducive to their progress. The Committee calls upon the Government to set a time-frame for those interventions and provide information on the progress made in the next report.

76. The Committee is concerned that women and girls are exploited in prostitution and inter-state and cross-border trafficking. It is also concerned that those women are exposed to HIV/AIDS and health risks and that existing legislation encourages mandatory testing and isolation.

77. The Committee calls upon the Government to review existing legislation on trafficking and forced prostitution and to strengthen law enforcement. It recommends the development of bilateral and inter-state controls and reintegration and advocacy programmes to prevent the exploitation of women and girls in forced prostitution and trafficking.

78. The Committee notes with concern that maternal mortality rates and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world. It also notes the adverse sex ratio and the incidence of sex-selective abortions despite the law banning that practice. It notes that family planning is only targeted at women.

79. The Committee recommends the adoption of a holistic approach to women's health throughout the life cycle in the country's health programme. It urges the Government to allocate resources from a "women's right to health" perspective, following the guidelines of the Committee's general recommendation 24. The Committee calls upon the Government to elicit the support of medical associations in enforcing

professional ethics and preventing sex-selective abortions. The Committee also recommends that the Government obtain the support of the medical profession in creating awareness of the urgent need to eliminate practices associated with son preference.

80. The Committee is concerned about the low participation of qualified women in the administration and the judiciary, including family courts and *lok adalats* or conciliation tribunals.

81. The Committee urges the Government to take affirmative action to increase women's participation in the judiciary and *lok adalats*, and provide sex-disaggregated data in its next report.

82. The Committee is concerned with significant disparities in economic activity rates for men and women. It is concerned that the practice of debt bondage and the denial of inheritance rights in land result in gross exploitation of women's labour and their impoverishment.

83. The Committee requests the Government to enforce laws on bonded labour and provide women with self-employment opportunities and minimum wages in home-based production and the non-formal sector. It calls upon the Government to review laws on inheritance urgently and to ensure that rural women obtain access to land and credit.

84. The Committee is concerned that the National Commission on Women has no power to enforce its proposals for law reform or intervene to prevent discrimination in the private or public sector. It notes that the National Commission and state commissions are not supported by adequate financial and other resources. It also notes that the National Commission on Women is not as well resourced or as empowered as the Human Rights Commission of India, and that it has no formal link with the state women's commissions.

85. The Committee recommends that NGOs be represented on the National Commission of Women. The Commission's powers should be as wide as those of the Human Rights Commission and include a complaints procedure. The Committee recommends that state commissions be similarly strengthened and linked with the National Commission.

86. The Committee is concerned that, despite the willingness of the Government to work with NGOs and women's groups, women activists and human rights defenders are exposed to violence and harassment in the communities in which they work.

87. The Committee urges the Government to strictly enforce the law and protect women activists and human rights defenders from acts of violence and harassment.

88. The Committee encourages India to deposit its acceptance to the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention as soon as possible.

89. The Committee requests that the Government responds in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in its concluding comments.

90. The Committee encourages the wide dissemination in India of the present concluding comments in order to make the people, civil society and Government sectors aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality of women, as well as further steps that are required in that regard. It also requests the Government to disseminate widely, in all local languages, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations and the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

Myanmar

91. The Committee considered the initial report of Myanmar (CEDAW/C/MMR/1) at its 450th, 451st and 457th meetings, on 21 and 26 January 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.450, 451, 457).

Introduction by the State party

92. In his introduction, the representative of Myanmar informed the Committee that the existing laws and social practices of the country were compatible with the Convention. He noted that the successive constitutions of Myanmar had included provisions for women's rights and equality and that women had legal equality with men in the political, economic, administrative and social spheres.

93. The representative informed the Committee that women and men in Myanmar had equal access to health services. He drew attention to the national health plan, which had the goal of "Health for all by the year 2000" and included activities on maternal and child health, birth spacing, reproductive health, nutritional development, an expanded programme of immunization and measures for the control of sexually

transmitted diseases. Myanmar sought to provide a holistic, life-cycle approach to health care for women.

94. The representative informed the Committee that Myanmar had set goals for women's health to be reached by the year 2000: a reduction in infant mortality from 47.1 per 1,000 live births to less than 45; a reduction in the maternal mortality rate from 1 per 1,000 live births to 0.5; an improvement in tetanus immunization to more than 90 per cent for infants and pregnant women; the provision of information on prevention of HIV/AIDS to all youth and women; a reduction in iodine deficiency disorders from 33.08 per cent to less than 20 per cent; the provision to pregnant women of access to pre-natal care, safe delivery, referral services and birth-spacing information; and a reduction in iron deficiency anaemia among pregnant women.

95. The representative informed the Committee that the most important issue regarding women's health was safe delivery. He noted that there was no statutory provision for abortion services, but that there were provisions for medical care and post-abortal contraception for women who had undergone unsafe abortions. Nutrition was also an essential issue and objectives included adoption of a national breast-feeding policy to promote exclusive breastfeeding to the age of four or six months. The representative noted that the fight against AIDS had been given top priority by the Government, since HIV/AIDS was currently seen in high-risk groups across the country and was starting to spread to low-risk groups. Research had been conducted to support the prevention and control of AIDS and the participation of NGOs in AIDS control activities had been encouraged.

96. The representative noted that health-related activities were made more effective by the participation of NGOs, such as the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, the Myanmar Medical Association (Women's Section) and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The reproductive health activities conducted by the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with NGOs, other ministries and the private sector, included: life skills training for women of childbearing age and for youth; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases; community education programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention; AIDS education in schools; capacity-building for community organizations and volunteers; expansion of birth-spacing programmes; and integrated management of the programmes on maternal and childhood illnesses.

97. The representative informed the Committee that a national workshop on the priority issues affecting women's health had been conducted in December 1999 by the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO). Counselling centres had been established around the country and training had been conducted on counselling techniques.

98. The representative informed the Committee that cooperation was ongoing between the Government, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, United Nations organizations and NGOs to provide basic education for every individual, regardless of sex. The Ministry of Education had carried out non-formal education projects in collaboration with United Nations agencies. Mobile units had been used to educate women in border areas. In addition, vocational training such as sewing, embroidery and livestock breeding had been initiated in collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Literacy resource centres were established by the Myanmar Educational Research Bureau and the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (Japan).

99. The representative informed the Committee that, prior to March 1999, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs had identified six areas of concern: education, health, economy, violence against women, culture and the girl child. Two further critical areas of concern had recently been identified: environment and the media.

100. In concluding the presentation, the representative noted that Myanmar was trying its best to implement the national plan of action for the advancement of women but that there were difficulties, such as a lack of sex-specific data. In 1997 the Government had begun collecting gender-specific data at the request of the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs. He noted that Myanmar required technical assistance and financial resources in order to reach its goals more quickly.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

101. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Myanmar for submitting its initial report and for engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Committee. It also commends the Government's efforts to produce an informative response, including some statistics, in a very short time. The Committee notes, however, that the report does not include sufficient reliable statistical data disaggregated by sex and provides insufficient information relating to the implementation of a number of articles in the Convention.

102. The Committee welcomes the fact that Myanmar ratified the Convention without reservations on substantive articles.

103. The Committee commends the Government of Myanmar for sending a high-level delegation, including an adviser of the Ministry of National Planning and Development.

Positive aspects

104. The Committee welcomes the fact that Myanmar has a national machinery for the advancement of women comprising the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, which is designated as the national focal point for women's affairs, and the Myanmar National Working Committee, which incorporates women from the grass-roots level and has implementation functions.

105. The Committee notes with appreciation that the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, the country's largest NGO, with branches and associations all over the country, has been working closely with the Government in the area of women's health, in particular, maternal health.

106. The Committee notes with satisfaction that in Myanmar women have the same rights as men to acquire, administer and dispose of property and that a wife has the right to transfer half of the marital property into her name upon divorce.

107. The Committee notes with satisfaction the high literacy rate of women in Myanmar.

108. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the legal age for marriage is 20 years for both sexes.

109. The Committee welcomes the fact that wife abuse is not common in Myanmar. It also commends the Government for initiating further research on domestic violence with a view to eradicating this phenomenon altogether and raising community awareness of existing laws in this regard.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

110. The Committee notes that internal ethnic and political conflict has brought about social, economic and political instability in Myanmar and that the conflict is a serious obstacle to the full implementation of the Convention.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

111. The Committee is concerned that the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, comprising deputy ministers of related ministries, representatives of the Attorney-General and the Chief Justice, and leaders of women's NGOs, does not receive any budget allocation from the Government despite its responsibilities for policy-making and its role as an intersectoral coordinating body. The Committee is further concerned that the Myanmar National Working Committee for Women's Affairs, an operational body, is exclusively comprised of voluntary members.

112. The Committee urges the Government to revise existing funding allocation policies to ensure that the national machinery has sufficient financial and human resources effectively to carry out its mandate and that members of the Myanmar National Committee should include those nominated on the basis of their expertise in the relevant fields.

113. The Committee welcomes the recent order of the Government of Myanmar, which overruled those provisions of the Towns Act and the Village Act that authorized the Government to extract forced labour from women. The Committee considers forced labour of women to be a contemporary form of slavery and a denial of their rights. The Committee, however, is concerned that the Towns Act and the Village Act remains as legislation. It is further concerned that there is little information about the implementation and enforcement of the recent order.

114. The Committee requests the Government to include more information and data in its next report on

the implementation process of the order and recommends that the Government take the action necessary to bring perpetrators to justice.

115. The Committee notes with concern that, although Myanmar has 135 ethnic groups, there is little information in its report about how the human rights of women in all ethnic groups are guaranteed, protected and promoted.

116. The Committee requests the Government to include in its next report more information and data on the situation of women in as many ethnic minority groups as possible and the measures taken by the Government of Myanmar to protect and ensure their human rights under the Convention.

117. The Committee is concerned about human rights violations of women, in particular by military personnel.

118. The Committee urges the Government to prosecute and punish those who violate the human rights of women, including military personnel, and to carry out human rights education and gender-sensitization training, for all law enforcement and military personnel.

119. The Committee notes with concern that there is little information on the trafficking in women and girls, despite the magnitude of the problem.

120. The Committee requests the Government to include in its next report more information and data on the situation of trafficking in women and girls.

121. The Committee is concerned with the increasing number of women with HIV/AIDS.

122. The Committee requests more information on the situation of women affected by HIV/AIDS, including women in trafficking and prostitution, in the next periodic report. Information should also be given on their access to health care, as well as the Government's efforts to educate women, and on measures to prevent the spread of the disease.

123. The Committee expresses its concern about the situation of women in prison and police custody.

124. The Committee requests the Government to include more information on women in custody in its next report, including data on custodial violence and the protection of the human rights of women in custody.

125. The Committee is concerned with the restricted admission of women to certain courses in higher education, which contravenes article 10 (b) and (c) of the Convention.

126. The Committee urges the Government to modify the policies on restricted admission, noting that the women themselves should be entitled to decide which subjects they wish to study and professions they wish to pursue.

127. The Committee notes with concern that the information provided on primary education is insufficient, in particular in regard to the enrolment of girls.

128. The Committee requests the Government to include more information and data with regard to primary education in its next report. The Committee also recommends that the Government set numerical targets for enrolment in primary education and that it report on the results of the implementation of such targets.

129. The Committee is concerned that there is no information on a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy resulting from sexual violence. The Committee is also concerned with the high rate of maternal mortality in Myanmar, since it notes that induced abortion often results in maternal mortality.

130. The Committee urges the Government to extend the coverage of the contraceptive distribution programme to reduce maternal mortality from unsafe abortions. The Committee requests the Government to include in its next report more information on sexual violence and pregnancies resulting from rape and the services that are available to the victims.

131. The Committee expresses concern at the absence of an enabling environment in Myanmar to ensure the full implementation of the Convention.

132. The Committee recommends that, in rebuilding its economic and political structures, the Government ensure the full and equal participation of women in an open and pluralistic society.

133. The Committee expresses the hope that the new constitution currently being drafted will guarantee gender equality and include a definition of "sex discrimination". The Committee also expresses the hope that the new constitution will incorporate the Convention in domestic law.

134. The Committee recommends that statistical data disaggregated by sex be included in the next report and that information be provided with regard to implementation of all articles of the Convention.

135. The Committee encourages the Government to ratify the amendment to article 20.1 of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time.

136. The Committee also encourages the Government to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

137. The Committee requests that the Government respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in these concluding comments.

138. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Myanmar of the present concluding comments in order to make the people and, in particular, governmental administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality of women and of the further steps that are required. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely — particularly to women's and human rights organizations — the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

2. Initial and second reports

Jordan

139. The Committee considered the first and second periodic reports of Jordan (CEDAW/C/JOR/1 and CEDAW/C/JOR/2) at its 448th, 449th and 456th meetings, on 20 and 26 January 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.448, 449 and 456).

Introduction by the State party

140. In presenting the initial and second periodic reports, the representative noted that developments in the State party since the ratification of the Convention in July 1992 had been mostly positive and beneficial to women. She emphasized the partnership between the official and non-governmental sectors in relation to women's issues, and that NGOs had been a major partner in preparing the second report. National machinery for the advancement of women, namely the Jordanian National Commission for Women, chaired by Princess Basma bint Talal, had been established with extensive tasks, including development of legislative proposals and of policies to eliminate discrimination against women. In addition to the Convention, Jordan was a State party to other international human rights instruments of particular relevance to women.

141. Although the Jordanian Constitution enshrined the principle of equality of all citizens, the representative noted that equality was not yet fully reflected in all national laws. Since 1992, legislation related to women's right to leased property had been amended and labour legislation had been revised to increase protection against termination of employment due to pregnancy, as well as to provide maternity-related benefits, including maternity leave. Amendments to civil status and passports regulations now enabled divorced or widowed women to be registered as heads of family.

142. The representative referred to a number of proposed revisions to the Penal Code that were currently before Parliament, including amendments to the penalty for adultery and for violence against women, including rape or murder. A proposal to repeal article 340 of the Penal Code, which exonerated a man for killing or injuring his wife or certain female relatives in an adulterous situation, had also been placed before Parliament, as had bills to amend the Passport Law and the Civil Status Law.

143. The Government was studying several other proposed amendments, including to the social security law, the civil retirement law, the nationality law, the civil health insurance regulations and a draft new civil status code. The representative underlined that legislative reform was accelerated by the high-level political will for such reform and for policy measures for women, as demonstrated by the late King Hussein and by King Abdullah II.

144. The representative noted that in the light of progress made, the national strategy for women of 1993 would be updated. A national programme of action for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had also been adopted. Both documents had been prepared in joint efforts of various ministries and representatives of civil society. The recent inclusion of a gender perspective in the country's economic and social development plan for 1999-2003 was an indication of the Government's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action.

145. Women's participation in political and public life had improved modestly in Jordan since ratification of the Convention, with progress hindered by prevalent social and cultural patterns that were not yet receptive to such changes. Women had been almost continuously present in the Cabinet since 1993, and for the first time in the country's history a woman currently occupied the post of Deputy Prime Minister. Women's representation had also increased within ministries and in the Senate, and there were now a total of seven women members of the judiciary. Women had made less progress in gaining electoral office, and none of the 17 women candidates was elected to Parliament in the 1997 elections. A petition to institute a transitional quota system to allocate at least 20 per cent of parliamentary seats to women had been rejected by the Government on the basis that women did not constitute a sector or a minority but half of society. Following the appointment of 99 women to municipal and rural councils throughout the country, 10 women had been elected to rural and municipal councils in 1999.

146. The representative informed the Committee that there was no gender gap in enrolment rates in the basic and secondary levels of education and that female enrolment at the university level had reached 48 per cent of total enrolment. Although the female illiteracy rate remained higher than that of men, it had dropped from 48 per cent in 1979 to 20.6 per cent in 1994 among women 15 years or older and was decreasing much faster than that of men. The illiteracy rate remained highest among the rural population, which constituted 20 per cent of the country's population. Literacy centres were being set up throughout the country, in cooperation with NGOs. A new postgraduate programme on women's studies had been introduced at a public university. In May 1999, a national commission for human rights education had been established.

147. Although there were no discriminatory legislative provisions relating to employment, women's participation in the active workforce remained low, at 13.6 per cent, with women in the 20 to 34-year age group having the highest rate of participation. Women's monthly pay was 85.7 per cent that of men and their unemployment rate nearly double. Recently, a minimum wage had been set, which was expected to directly benefit women working in the private sector.

148. The representative noted that, in partnership with NGOs, remarkable improvements had been made in regard to women's health. Reproductive health indicators had improved, including improved pregnancy health care, an increase in medically supervised births, lowered maternal mortality rates and increased use of contraceptives. Improvements had also been made in health services for special groups of women, including elderly and women with disabilities.

149. The representative indicated that clear and positive change had occurred regarding the elimination of domestic violence. Although there were no statistics on its occurrence, patterns of increased violence had led to the creation of a family protection department in the Directorate of Public Security to deal with cases of sexual assault on women and children. NGOs and civil society institutions played a key role in efforts to eliminate domestic violence.

150. The representative noted that civil law affirmed equality between women and men. With regard to family relations, Jordan adhered to the tolerant principles of Islamic Shariah, but, while women had the right to determine their conditions for inclusion in the marriage contract, that provision was rarely used. Campaigns had been launched, especially by NGOs, to increase women's awareness and use of those rights.

151. Despite a clear commitment at all levels to implement the Convention, the representative noted that obstacles to its full implementation remained. Political and economic realities of the region directly affected national priorities and thus implementation of the Convention. Poverty and the predominant social and cultural conditions limited improvements for women in such areas as employment, participation in public life and access to decision-making. In addition, monitoring and follow-up were made more difficult by a lack of data disaggregated by sex. In conclusion, the representative highlighted the political will to overcome those obstacles. The existence of national machinery for the advancement of women, with the participation of both government and non-governmental representatives, had made the opinions of grass-roots women accessible to decision makers and further commitments would be achieved in the years ahead.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

152. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Jordan for submitting its initial report

as well as a timely, detailed and well structured second periodic report, which follows the guidelines of the Committee and provides information about implementation of all the articles of the Convention. It commends the Government on its oral presentation and the replies to the Committee's questions that have further clarified recent developments in the State party. It appreciates the open manner in which the reports were prepared, in particular the extensive consultative process with NGOs during the preparation of the second periodic report.

153. The Committee commends the Government of Jordan for sending a high-level delegation headed by the Secretary-General of the Jordanian National Commission for Women, which established a constructive, open and sincere dialogue with the members of the Committee.

154. The Committee recognizes that the ratification of the Convention by Jordan constitutes an important step in the development of an egalitarian approach to women's rights in the country.

Positive aspects

155. The Committee commends the Government for having ratified the Convention in 1992. This ratification is an expression of the political will and the determination of the Government to work towards the full implementation of the Convention and the achievement of equality between women and men. It also appreciates the fact that the Government recognizes remaining areas of discrimination against women in law and practice.

156. The Committee appreciates the fact that the National Charter, which is not a legally binding document, expressly affirms the constitutional equality of women and men, who together contribute to the development and modernization of Jordanian society.

157. The Committee welcomes the work undertaken by the national machinery, namely the National Commission for Women, to implement the Convention, and its strong and cooperative links with NGOs.

158. The Committee welcomes the legislative reforms undertaken by the State party since ratification of the Convention, including reform of labour law, civil service regulations and regulations concerning the Family Document.

159. The Committee notes with satisfaction the level of education girls and women have achieved. In particular, the Committee expresses satisfaction that parity has been achieved in enrolment rates in the basic and secondary cycles and the fact that the gap between women and men in university education is closing. It also commends the Government's efforts to further reduce women's illiteracy rate.

160. The Committee notes with satisfaction that there is an increasing trend in women's participation in the labour force, which contributes to women's empowerment and strengthens their participation in public life in general.

161. The Committee welcomes with appreciation the fact that women's NGOs play an active role in public life. The Committee commends, in particular, their efforts to support women's political, economic and social mobilization and empowerment.

162. The Committee commends the progress made in improving women's health situation, including the provision of reproductive health services and the prevalence of contraceptive use among married women.

163. The Committee notes that violence against women is now acknowledged as a critical area of concern that needs to be addressed through governmental action.

164. The Committee commends the Government on the preparation of a national strategy for women and of a national programme of action for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. It notes with satisfaction that these were prepared in a collaborative effort, involving various government bodies, the national machinery and NGOs. It also welcomes the inclusion of a gender perspective in the economic and social development plan for 1999-2003 by including women's issues in all of the sectors covered by the plan.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

165. The Committee considers that the country's current socio-economic situation, including the doubling of the population, owing largely to refugee influx, and the scarcity of natural resources, affect the full implementation of the Convention. The persistence of strong stereotypical attitudes concerning the roles

and responsibilities of women and men also constitute an impediment to the full implementation of the Convention.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

166. The Committee expresses its concern that cultural practices and strong stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, affecting all spheres of life and impeding the full implementation of the Convention, persist.

167. The Committee urges the Government to review, or enact laws that will make cultural practices that discriminate against women illegal. The Committee urges the Government to increase awareness-raising programmes, as well as change stereotypical attitudes and perceptions about the roles and responsibilities of women and men.

168. The Committee expresses its concern that, although article 6 of the Jordanian Constitution contains the principle of equality of all Jordanians before the law, it does not contain a specific provision stating that there shall be no discrimination either *de jure* or de facto on the ground of sex.

169. The Committee calls on the Government to encourage a constitutional amendment to incorporate equality on the basis of sex in article 6 of the Constitution and to reflect fully article 1 of the Convention in the Constitution.

170. The Committee is also concerned that although the Convention acquired the force of law within the country upon ratification it has still not been published in the Official Gazette, which is a prerequisite to it becoming legally binding.

171. The Committee urges the Government to publish the Convention in the Official Gazette without delay, and to initiate necessary legislative action to make the Convention enforceable in courts. The Committee further calls on the Government to undertake a review of all existing legislation to bring it fully into compliance with the amended Constitution and the Convention.

172. The Committee is concerned that Jordanian nationality law prevents a Jordanian woman from passing on her nationality to her children if her husband is not Jordanian. This is an anachronistic situation at a time when Jordan is making major strides in its economic and democratic development and when marriage between persons of different nationalities is increasingly common. It also notes with concern that Jordanian law prohibits women from concluding contracts in their own name, from travelling alone and from choosing their place of residence. It considers these limitations on the rights of women to be inconsistent with the legal status of women under the Jordanian Constitution and the Convention. The Committee notes with concern that Jordan has entered reservations to articles 9.2 and 15.4, which relate to these matters.

173. The Committee calls on the State party to revoke these laws and to withdraw these reservations to articles 9.2 and 15.4.

174. The Committee notes that a woman's right to choose a family name, a profession or occupation, rights upon divorce and rights and responsibilities as a parent are not recognized in the Personal Status Code. It also notes with concern that Jordanian law recognized the practice of polygamy.

175. The Committee calls upon the Government to amend the Personal Status Code to recognize women's rights to choice of family name, occupation, as well as their rights upon divorce and with regard to their responsibilities as parents. The Committee calls upon the Government to reconsider the law and policy on polygamy with a view to eliminating this practice in line with the Convention, the Constitution and evolving social relations in the country. It also recommends that the Government review its reservations to article 16 (c), (d) and (g) with a view to their withdrawal.

176. The Committee notes with concern that violence against women is a critical issue.

177. The Committee recommends that the Government take the necessary legal and social measures, including awareness raising, to address effectively the issue of violence against women.

178. The Committee expresses its concern that several provisions of the Penal Code continue to discriminate against women. In particular, the Committee is concerned that article 340 of the Penal Code excuses a man who kills or injures his wife or his female kin caught in the act of adultery.

179. The Committee urges the Government to provide all possible support for the speedy repeal of article 340

and to undertake awareness-raising activities that make "honour killings" socially and morally unacceptable. It also urges the Government to take steps that ensure the replacement of protective custody with other types of protection for women.

180. The Committee expresses its concern that the prohibition of abortion also applies to cases where pregnancy is due to rape or incest.

181. The Committee calls on the Government to initiate legislative action to permit safe abortion for victims of rape and incest.

182. The Committee is concerned at the very low representation of women in elected and appointed office. In particular, the Committee is concerned that there are no women in Parliament and few women are office holders in rural and municipal councils. While it welcomes the fact that, for the first time, a woman holds the post of Deputy Prime Minister, it is concerned that women hold a small percentage of ministerial positions.

183. The Committee urges the Government to work with political parties, unions and other stakeholders to increase the number of women elected and appointed to political office and decision-making positions. In particular, it encourages the Government to take temporary special measures, including the introduction of quotas, in accordance with article 4.1 of the Convention, to remedy the low representation of women in the political sphere.

184. The Committee is concerned that women make up only 13.6 per cent of the paid labour force, a situation that appears to be largely due to social constraints rather than discriminatory legislation. It is concerned that restrictive employment legislation in the area of night work and regulations on jobs banned to women reinforce women's difficulties in obtaining paid employment. The Committee is concerned that although Jordan has ratified ILO Convention No. 100 on equal pay for work of equal value, there continues to be a wage gap to women's disadvantage. The Committee is concerned at the difference in entitlement to maternity leave in the public and private sectors.

185. The Committee calls on the Government to review its legislation and policy in the employment sector to facilitate full implementation of article 11 of the Convention. It calls on the Government to review ILO recommendations concerning maternity leave, to adapt its national situation to these recommendations and to consider coverage of such leave through social insurance schemes in order to prevent private employers from discriminating against women in recruitment.

186. While commending the work done by the National Commission for Women, the Committee is concerned at the lack of decision-making and enforcement power of the Commission. It also notes with concern that the National Commission was established by decree rather than by law.

187. The Committee recommends that the Government consider strengthening the National Commission for Women by placing its existence on a legislative basis, by strengthening its decision-making and enforcement powers and by providing adequate human and financial resources. It also recommends that this mechanism be given the mandate to receive complaints about discrimination.

188. The Committee expresses its concern that, notwithstanding rural women's important role in Jordan and the Government's efforts at providing education and extension services, they continue to be marginalized in agriculture.

189. The Committee calls on the Government to ensure that special measures are in place to support the full integration of rural women in national development.

190. The Committee urges the Government to ratify as soon as possible the amendment to article 20 (i) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time.

191. The Committee also urges the Governor to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention as soon as possible.

192. The Committee requests the Government to respond to the concerns expressed in these concluding comments in its next report.

193. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Jordan of the current concluding comments in order to make the people, in particular government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality of women as well as of further steps that are required in this regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the

Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

3. Initial report and second and third periodic reports

Democratic Republic of the Congo

194. The Committee considered the initial report and the second and third periodic reports of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (CEDAW/C/ZAR/1, 2 and 2/Add.1 and Corr.1 and CEDAW/C/COD/1) at its 454th and 455th and 463rd meetings, on 25 and 31 January 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.454, 455 and 463).

Introduction by the State party

195. In introducing the report, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Family of the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted that her country attached great importance to the issue of the advancement of women, despite the current difficult situation her country was facing. She recalled that after becoming a sovereign nation in 1960 her country experienced a dictatorial regime from 1965 to 1990 and that mismanagement during that time was the cause of various difficulties. A transition period began in 1991, when the National Sovereign Conference adopted the Constitutional Act. In 1994, civil unrest in Rwanda triggered mass displacement of refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, since August 1998, armed conflict had further aggravated the situation. As a result, the socio-economic situation, already hampered by the impact of economic globalization, had further deteriorated and the population, and women in particular, had experienced growing insecurities and poverty.

196. The representative referred to the legal framework for the protection of human rights. She noted that her country had ratified international treaties to promote the human rights of women and children without reservations. Structures to define policies and programmes to promote the rights of women and families had been established, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Family, the General Secretary for the Family, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights and national and provincial councils on women and children. Significant efforts had been made to implement the recommendations arising from regional and global conferences on women, including the Fourth World Conference on Women, in which the Democratic Republic of the Congo had participated.

197. Although the fundamental principle of equality between men and women was enshrined in the Constitution, discrimination against women still prevailed, owing to traditional mentalities and negative customs. The representative emphasized that certain laws were contradictory to the provision of the Constitution, notably, article 448 of the Family Code, which still denied legal rights to married women. Discrimination also existed in the areas of pensions and in the Penal Code, which established more severe penalties for women who committed adultery than for men. The right to ownership of land was granted to all, without distinction. However, discriminatory attitudes and customs persisted, particularly in the rural areas, and women did not take advantage of their right to land.

198. A national forum on the rights and leadership of women was organized in 1996 to sensitize women with regard to their rights and to elaborate a plan of action. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Family, in collaboration with NGOs, had modified discriminatory provisions and conducted sensitization campaigns on women's human rights and on violence against the girl child and women. The Government had established a national programme for the advancement of women, which aimed to strengthen the economic power of women, to improve their legal and social status, formal education, health and access to economic resources, to provide assistance to rural women and to eliminate customs that negatively affect women.

199. The representative emphasized that the Government, through the Ministry of Information, had made special efforts to raise public awareness concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other instruments related to human rights. Private television companies, journals and magazines, as well as churches and NGOs had also publicized the Convention. With the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Convention was now being translated into national languages.

200. Stereotypes about the role of women affected them from early girlhood. Since the creation of the Ministry of Advancement of Women in 1980, several awareness raising campaigns had been organized to

promote a more positive image of the role of women in society and in the family. A study on customary laws and the rights of women had been conducted by the Ministry of Advancement of Women and NGOs to develop strategies to eliminate all harmful customs and practices.

201. The representative noted that the majority of Congolese women remained illiterate and that literacy programmes had been initiated, targeting girls who dropped out of school and older women. Despite the right of all children to education without distinction based on sex, race, age, and social class, the rate of young girls leaving school was very high, especially in the rural areas. Efforts were being made by the National Forum on the Rights and Leadership of Congolese Women, in partnership with the private sector, NGOs and churches, to increase the enrolment rate of young girls in secondary education.

202. The representative informed the Committee that Congolese women had been victims of physical, psychological and moral violence, but that much of this was unreported and undocumented. Young girls also suffered from various types of sexual violence, including rape and female genital mutilation. In the past several years, awareness-raising campaigns concerning violence against women had been organized by NGOs in collaboration with the Government. A study had been conducted in October 1999 by the Ministry of Advancement of Women and NGOs to provide a basis for strategies to address violence against women.

203. In concluding, the representative stated that, despite the difficulties being experienced by the country, her Government was making every effort to eliminate discrimination against women and improve the condition of women's lives, including through the establishment of a national machinery for the advancement of women, the elimination of discrimination through the draft constitution, the adoption of a gender approach in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of all development projects and the elaboration of a national programme for the promotion of Congolese Women. She emphasized, however, that even if all commitments were fulfilled, they would have little effect in the absence of peace.

Concluding comments by the Committee

Introduction

204. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for ratifying the Convention in 1985 without reservations and for submitting its initial report and second and third periodic reports, together with additional information in 1999 to update these reports, at a most difficult time for the State party.

205. The Committee also expresses its appreciation to the Congolese Government for sending a large delegation headed by the Minister for Social Affairs and the Family, who had made an excellent oral presentation. The Committee appreciates the open-minded attitude with which the report was presented; furthermore, the responses to the questions contributed to the constructive dialogue that took place between the State party and the Committee, leading to a better understanding of the situation of Congolese women.

Positive aspects

206. The Committee commends the Congolese Government's effort to continue to implement the Convention despite the ongoing war and the economic crisis.

207. The Committee notes with satisfaction that despite the prevailing difficult situation, a ministry has been set up to deal with matters concerning equality between men and women. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the National Women's Council, which is responsible for ensuring that a gender-specific approach is integrated into development programmes, and in particular its plan of action, which incorporates the Beijing and Cairo Programmes of Action.

208. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government for cooperating with NGOs and, in this regard, hopes that the relations they have established with the State will help to speed up the peace process in the country.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

209. One of the main obstacles to the full implementation of the Convention is the current war. The Committee recognizes that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been facing economic, social and political problems related to the war, which

have had a negative impact on the whole population, particularly on girls and women, who are often victims of rape and gender-based violence, and on most refugees and displaced persons, who are experiencing great hardship. The situation is also being aggravated by growing inflation, which has eroded the quality of life of millions of women who do not have enough resources to survive.

210. The Committee notes that the persistence of prejudices and stereotyped behaviours with respect to the role of women and men in the family and society, based on the idea of male superiority and the consequent subordination of women to men, is a serious obstacle to the implementation of the Convention.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

211. The Committee notes with concern that despite some legislative gains, the Family Code, the Penal Code and the Labour Code still contain discriminatory provisions.

212. The Committee recommends that the Government give the highest priority to the adoption of legislation to protect the *de jure* and de facto equality of women, and to the enforcement of this legislation.

213. The Committee is concerned at the fact that the national machinery and the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Family do not have adequate resources to implement their plan of action.

214. The Committee encourages the Government to find the necessary resources to entrench the principle of gender equality, particularly ensuring the equal participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making.

215. The Committee is concerned at the persistence of traditional customs and practices, which are in violation of women's fundamental rights, such as dowry, the levirate, polygamy, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

216. The Committee urges the Government to enact legislation to prohibit such practices. It also recommends that the Government work with NGOs and the media to change attitudes through information and awareness-raising campaigns, the teaching of the Convention in schools and the translation of the Convention into local languages so as to accelerate women's enjoyment of their human rights.

217. The Committee is gravely concerned about the reports of women who were raped, assaulted or severely tortured during the war. It is also concerned about the situation of refugee and displaced women suffering from the consequences of war and at the psychological and mental trauma experienced by women and girls as a result of the forced conscription of children.

218. The Committee recommends that the Government adopt specific and structural measures, including legislation to protect women from such acts and provide to women victims of violence psychosocial support and socio-economic integration measures. It also requests the Government to introduce awareness-raising measures to emphasize the importance of maintaining human rights standards in times of war. It calls on the Government to ensure that children are not recruited as soldiers.

219. The Committee is concerned about the extent of prostitution, often resulting from poverty, and particularly prostitution of girl children.

220. The Committee urges the Government to adopt and enforce laws that prohibit the prostitution of girl children as well as to introduce appropriate measures for the social rehabilitation of prostitutes and to ensure that psycho-educational services are provided, in particular to these very young prostitutes. In addition, in view of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, full attention must be paid to the provision of health services for prostitutes.

221. The Committee is concerned about the under-representation of women in political life and in the governing bodies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including those of the judicial system, and stresses the importance of a social and political environment conducive to improving the situation of women in all sectors of public life and in private life.

222. The Committee recommends the adoption of temporary special measures with specific objectives, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention.

223. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the Government in the sphere of education, the Committee remains deeply concerned about the low rate of school

enrolment of girls, their high drop-out rate and also the high female illiteracy rate, especially in rural areas.

224. The Committee encourages the Government to step up its efforts by establishing specific programmes to reduce female illiteracy and promote the access of girls to secondary schools. The Government should also envisage the provision of free primary education.

225. The Committee is concerned about *de jure* and de facto discrimination against women with regard to the right to work, particularly the requirement of the husband's authorization of a wife's paid employment and reduction of pay during maternity leave.

226. The Committee urges the Government to amend discriminatory laws in the sphere of employment in accordance with article 11 of the Convention.

227. The Committee notes with deep concern the high rates of maternal and infant mortality, the low rate of contraceptive use, particularly in rural areas, and the decline in health services.

228. The Committee calls upon the Government to make efforts to improve the use of contraceptive methods, to repeal article 178 of the Penal Code, which prohibits the dissemination of contraceptive methods, and to provide sex education for young people.

229. The Committee requests that the Government promote the improvement of health services for women throughout their life-cycle, taking into account the Committee's general recommendation 24 on women and health.

230. The Committee is concerned about the situation of rural women, who constitute the majority of the population. In addition, customs and beliefs are most broadly accepted and followed in rural areas, preventing women from inheriting or gaining ownership of land and property.

231. The Committee urges the Government to pay the greatest attention to the needs of rural women and to ensure that they benefit from the policies and programmes adopted in all spheres, including recognition of their status as agricultural employees who should benefit from the rights accorded by labour law. Rural women's equal participation in decision-making, and access to health services and credit should be ensured. The Committee recommends that more studies should be undertaken on the situation of rural women and that more statistical data should be collected to provide guidelines for policies in this sphere.

232. The Committee expresses concern about food taboos, which are not only detrimental to the health of women, especially mothers, but also have serious consequences for the health of future generations. The Committee recommends that the Government address the issue of eliminating food taboos by raising awareness about their detrimental effects on the health of women.

233. The Committee regrets that the reports do not fully abide by its guidelines on the form and content of initial and periodic reports and do not take into account its general recommendations.

234. The Committee requests that, in preparing its next report, the Democratic Republic of the Congo take into account the Committee's guidelines and general recommendations.

235. The Committee encourages the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deposit its instrument of acceptance to the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time.

236. The Committee urges the Government to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

237. The Committee requests that the Government respond in its next report to the specific issues raised in its concluding comments.

238. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the present concluding comments in order to make Congolese people, and particularly administrators and politicians, aware of the steps to be taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality for women, and the further steps required in that regard. The Committee also requests the Government to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

4. Combined second and third periodic report

Burkina Faso

239. The Committee considered the combined second and third periodic reports of Burkina Faso

(CEDAW/C/BFA/2-3) at its 458th and 459th meeting, on 27 January 1999 (see CEDAW/C/SR.458 and 459).

Introduction by the State party

240. In introducing the report, the representative of Burkina Faso informed the Committee that since ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984, the Government had formulated new policies and legislation on the equality of rights of both spouses and children, women's access to land ownership, income-generating programmes and employment-support initiatives for women. She noted that the ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol were incorporated into the country's struggle for development and she expressed gratitude to the United Nations for initiatives to promote women's empowerment.

241. The representative informed the Committee that women in her country faced sociocultural and economic discrimination, particularly in the rural areas where 84.6 per cent of the population lived and where deeply-rooted traditions and customs shaped daily life. The representative drew attention to the extreme poverty of 44.4 per cent of the population, a majority of them women, and the slim possibilities they had to participate in major economic enterprises. She noted that inequality between women and men resulted from poverty, illiteracy, traditional norms and stereotypes nurtured by the patriarchal system.

242. The representative indicated that, despite efforts to promote and improve the situation of women, challenges remained. The maternal mortality rate was very high (531 per 100,000 live births), as was the fertility rate, and contraceptive use was low. In addition, the majority of the population was under 18 years of age.

243. Taking into consideration the high levels of illiteracy (in rural areas the female literacy rate was 5 per cent, compared to 15.5 per cent for men) and the persisting bias against educating girls, a national plan for the education of girls had been developed and the goal of reducing the gap between the educational levels of girls and boys by one third had been established. Public funds for education had been increased, teachers recruited, school infrastructures constructed and special programmes and incentives to support girls' education introduced. In addition, 50 per cent of the students in newly established satellite schools had to be girls.

244. The representative informed the Committee that maternal and child health programmes had been revised and a multisectoral plan to address HIV/AIDS had been introduced. Training programmes for medical personnel to assist older people had also been developed. Insufficient health coverage in rural areas and lack of resources and of qualified health personnel hampered the decentralization of health services, while reproductive health services did not take the needs of groups such as men and adolescent girls and boys into account.

245. The representative drew attention to the different forms of violence, including physical and psychological violence, perpetrated by men against women in vulnerable situations. Steps had been taken to eradicate traditional harmful practices against women, particularly prevalent in the rural areas. Female genital mutilation had been prohibited by the Penal Code in 1996, which established severe punishments for perpetrators of all forms of genital mutilation. The practice of levirate had been prohibited by the Individual and Family Code, while legislation existed with regard to rape, adultery and polygamy.

246. Despite specific legislation on agrarian reform, which established equality of women and men with regard to access to land, traditional inheritance practices weakened women's access and security to land they customarily owned. The Government was committed to elaborating adequate legislation to promote the upward economic mobility and development of rural women. Such women had access to training, material and agrarian extension services. Many of the projects were supported by international and bilateral donor countries.

247. The representative informed the Committee that credit was available to women through savings and credit banks. A Support Fund for Women's Gainful Activities had been established in 1990, but obstacles persisted with respect to women's access to finance, including lack of information with regard to credit opportunities and the disapproval expressed by husbands of the economic and entrepreneurial activities of their wives. The representative added that legislation had been enacted in 1998 to ensure equal access to employment and equal income for women and men in the public sector.

248. The representative drew attention to the fact that, in spite of deeply rooted sociocultural practices, illiteracy and the social division of labour that prevents women's empowerment, the Government of Burkina Faso had been able to promote women to public decision-making posts. Since the presentation of the initial report, the number of women ministers, deputies, members of parliament and ambassadors had considerably increased. The representative highlighted strategies and policies that had been adopted to promote women into decision-making posts in the public and private sectors and noted that the national plan of action included the social mobilization of different sectors including political parties, ministries, NGOs and civil society, so as to ensure the portrayal of a positive image of women.

249. The representative described the establishment of coordination structures, institutional mechanisms and information and research centres for the promotion of women, and the introduction of focal points in various ministries, which were all part of efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies, programmes and public life.

250. In conclusion, the representative noted that the Government had introduced specific measures to assist particularly vulnerable women in vulnerable situations, such as women with disabilities, prostitutes, older women and women victims of violence. Measures included policies to prevent discrimination and trafficking in women and to increase the empowerment of women, through protective legislation and economic and social programmes.

Concluding comments of the Committee

251. The Committee commends the Government of Burkina Faso on the excellent presentation of its second and third periodic reports and the objective analysis of the situation of women in Burkina Faso.

252. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Burkina Faso for sending a large, high-level delegation, headed by the Minister for the Advancement of Women. The Committee welcomes the fact that the delegation established a constructive, frank and sincere dialogue with the members of the Committee and provided, in its replies to the Committee's questions and in its oral statement, additional information and recent statistics concerning areas of concern to the Committee, namely: education, health and employment, particularly in rural areas.

253. The Committee applauds the Government of Burkina Faso for its steadfast political will and its determination to achieve progress in the status of women, despite a difficult socio-economic situation, and to explain the provisions of the Convention.

254. The Committee also commends the Government of Burkina Faso for having involved women's associations and NGOs in the preparation of its reports and for continuing to work in close collaboration with them.

255. The Committee applauds the Government for its expressed desire to ratify the Optional Protocol.

Positive aspects

256. The Committee commends the Government for having adopted new legal and institutional measures since the submission of the initial report in order to implement the Convention and fulfil its commitments vis-à-vis the international community. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the Individual and Family Code restores to women their fundamental rights and establishes the principles of equal consent to marriage choice of residence of the spouses during the marriage and the right to succession for the surviving spouse. The Code also regulates the marriageable age and establishes monogamy as the legal form of marital union.

257. The Committee congratulates the Government on the fact that the 1991 Constitution recognizes equality and non-discrimination against women.

258. The Committee commends the Government on the fact that, as a result of the revision of the labour code in 1992, the principle of equality has been confirmed and a definition of discrimination has been established.

259. The Committee notes that the May 1996 law on agrarian and land reorganization has accorded women the same rights and conditions of access to land as men.

260. The Committee welcomes the establishment in June 1997 of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, which demonstrates the Government's interest in the development of women's rights. The Committee also notes with satisfaction that the Ministry for the

Advancement of Women has designated a focal point in all the ministries involved in the follow-up of national policies and programmes to benefit women in order to incorporate a gender-specific approach at the level of analysis and to evaluate the results achieved.

261. The Committee particularly commends the Government of Burkina Faso on the provisions and policies adopted in conjunction with all civil society to eradicate the practice of genital mutilation, which infringes on the right to personal security and the physical and moral integrity of girls and threatens their lives and health.

262. The Committee notes with satisfaction the promulgation of a provision in the penal code in 1996 which prohibits and punishes female genital mutilation.

Difficulties affecting implementation of the Convention

263. The Committee notes that the economic difficulties, resulting mainly from the scarcity of State resources and the discriminatory customary and traditional practices, which are still a heavy burden for the women of Burkina Faso, exacerbate the very high illiteracy rate in Burkina Faso and therefore hinder the implementation of the Convention.

264. The Committee also notes that all the human development indicators — particularly in rural areas — are among the lowest in the continent and constitute a serious obstacle to the implementation of the Convention.

Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

265. The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of discriminatory traditions and customs which accentuate stereotypes and resist all change. These social practices, attitudes and beliefs derive from an overwhelmingly rural population with low levels of literacy and are contributing to the delay in the advancement of women.

266. The Committee urges the Government to adopt all appropriate measures and policies to develop the sociocultural climate to the benefit of women. The Committee calls on the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, with the cooperation of NGOs, intellectuals, religious leaders and the media, to encourage a change in people's way of thinking and accelerate the process of the emancipation of women through law reform, information, education and communications activities, particularly in rural areas, so that a change takes place in women's view of themselves and society as a whole recognizes that the participation of women is necessary for the development of Burkina Faso.

267. The Committee is very concerned about the female illiteracy rate, particularly in rural areas, which is one of the highest in the world.

268. The Committee recommends that the Government accord priority to the education of girls and women, seeking international assistance, to ensure and promote universal enrolment of girls and preclude drop-out. It calls on the Government to allocate more financial and human resources to the education sector, to recruit more women teachers and to ensure that school textbooks no longer carry negative images of women.

269. The Committee also recommends that, in addition to formal education, the Government should focus its efforts on informal education and the campaign against illiteracy through programmes targeted at girls and women. The Committee urges the Government to take into account the importance of civic education for women and the family and the teaching of human rights throughout the school curriculum.

270. The Committee, while welcoming the State party's efforts to analyse and identify the various forms of violence against women, is concerned about the absence of legislative texts and policies which would specifically protect women who are victims of domestic and sexual violence.

271. The Committee recommends that the Government should take adequate legislative and structural measures and provide assistance to these women. The Committee also recommends that, as in the case of the campaign to combat genital mutilation, education and awareness-raising activities on the phenomenon of violence within the family and sexual violence should be directed towards the police force, judges, health-care providers and the media so that their efforts can be more effective. A legal education campaign directed at women is desirable, so that they are better aware of their rights.

272. The Committee is concerned about the low level of representation of women, particularly in elective bodies.

273. The Committee recommends that the State party implement temporary special measures set forth in article 4 (1) of the Convention and use a quota system in order to achieve a substantial improvement in the number of women in Parliament and increase their participation in political life and decision-making.

274. The Committee is particularly concerned about the precarious state of women's health, especially in rural areas. The high rates of maternal and infant mortality caused by infectious diseases and malnutrition result from the lack of local health-care centres and adequate health-care providers. The Committee notes with concern the lack of access for women to family planning services.

275. The Committee recommends that the Government should pay particular attention to this problem in order to improve the indicators of women's health. It recommends that national reproductive health programmes should be drawn up both for women and for girls in order to prevent early pregnancy and induced abortion.

276. The Committee recommends that the access of women to primary health services and drinking water be facilitated. It encourages the Government to integrate family planning services in primary health care so that women can have easier access to them. The Committee recommends that the State party should organize awareness-raising and information activities for women about contraceptive measures and should involve men in these activities. It also recommends that the State party should review its legislation on abortion and provide for coverage by social security. The Committee further recommends that the female population should be made aware of the risks and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

277. The Committee is concerned that, despite the law on agrarian and land reform, which establishes equality between men and women with regard to land, prejudices and customary rights are once again hindering the implementation of this law.

278. The Committee recommends that the State party should encourage the services concerned to take into account the rights of women to property and to provide them with the necessary credit.

279. The Committee stresses, with concern, that although the laws prohibit all discrimination against women at the level of employment, men and women are segregated and differentiated at the time of recruitment and in the allocation of responsibilities, as well as in levels of remuneration.

280. The Committee recommends that, in both the public and the private sectors, the State party should ensure strict respect for labour laws, and take measures to eliminate discrimination in employment.

281. The Committee notes that the Government has taken measures in the Individual and Family Code to place restrictions on the practice of polygamy, but it remains concerned that the great majority of women are unaware of these rules.

282. The Committee recommends that the Government work towards the elimination of the practice of polygamy. It recommends that it ensure enforcement of the Individual and Family Code and protect the rights of women. It also recommends that the Government embark on a comprehensive public effort, in cooperation with NGOs, directed at both women and men, to change existing attitudes regarding polygamy and particularly to educate women on their rights and how to avail themselves of these rights. The Committee also recommends that the Government take measures to protect the human rights of women who are already in polygamous unions.

283. The Committee urges the Government to deposit its instrument of acceptance to the amendment of article 20 (1) of the Convention relating to the Committee's meeting time.

284. The Committee also urges the Government to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention as soon as possible.

285. The Committee calls upon the Government of Burkina Faso to include information on the subjects of concern raised in these concluding comments in the next periodic report, which it is required to submit in accordance with article 18 of the Convention.

286. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Burkina Faso of the present concluding comments so that the people, and particularly administrators and politicians, are made aware of the steps to be taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality for women, and the further steps required in that regard. It also requests the Government to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's

general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

5. Combined second and third periodic report and fourth periodic report

Germany

287. The Committee considered the combined second and third periodic report and fourth periodic report of Germany (CEDAW/C/DEU/2-3 and 4) at its 464th and 465th meetings, on 1 February 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.464 and 465).

Introduction by the State party

288. In introducing the reports, the representative of Germany noted that the change in Government in September 1998 had led to new priorities in the country's equal rights policy. Ten years had passed since Germany's reunification as well as since the presentation of Germany's initial report, thus providing an occasion to assess developments of equal rights and equal opportunities in unified Germany. The transition from the economic and social system of the former German Democratic Republic to a system based on parliamentary democracy, federalism and the social market economy had entailed painful adjustments for the people living in the East. Women had often been severely affected by the negative effects of that process. Labour market and social policy measures had helped soften the effects of the radical changes for women in the new *Laender* (states). Having enjoyed full employment prior to unification, women's unemployment rate in the new *Laender*, while declining, was still 20.7 per cent. New public and non-governmental institutions had also emerged, contributing to the improvement of women's overall social situation.

289. The representative underlined that on 10 December 1999, Germany had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The ratification process would be initiated in 2000, together with acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention. In the light of the recent decision of the European Court of Justice on Germany's prohibition that women bear arms, Germany would assess its reservation to article 7 (b) of the Convention.

290. In her presentation, the representative focused on two key priorities of the current Government's equal rights policy, namely the women and work programme and the action plan to combat violence against women. The women and work programme aimed at ensuring better use of women's skills in all sectors of society, to provide new impetus for equal opportunity at work and to promote equal participation in the work force and society. While women were better educated than ever before and represented 42 per cent of all gainfully employed or self-employed persons, they continued to suffer inequalities in the distribution of family work and in the allocation of training places and jobs. Their wages remained below those of men, they held 90 per cent of all part-time jobs, were concentrated in few occupational groups and ranked lower in the business hierarchy.

291. Consequently, the women and work programme would address various areas to assist in implementing the Convention. A draft bill would be prepared to increase the number of women in the federal administration and in policy advisory bodies. The under-representation of women in management positions in German business and industry would be addressed through the elaboration of effective equal opportunity regulations for the private sector since voluntary action alone was not enough. A group of experts had been established to make recommendations that would gain wide acceptance and take into account the great diversity of companies. In order to address the still considerable differences in women's and men's wages, the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth would submit a report on equal pay and the economic situation of women to the German Bundestag. The report would examine the primary causes of wage discrimination, which, due to the clear legal situation, was no longer the result of direct wage discrimination against women. Measures to create opportunities for women in the expanding information technology sector would be undertaken, as would measures to encourage women's entrepreneurship. In cooperation with the *Laender*, efforts to improve equal opportunities for women in teaching and research would continue and a target of 20 per cent women holding professorships in institutions of higher education by the year 2005 had been set. Measures were planned to reconcile family and career through greater work flexibility for women and men, flexibility of child-raising leave, improvement of childcare institutions and the promotion of a new male image to help men fit into the role of equal sharers in family work and child-raising.

292. Turning to the action plan to combat violence against women, the representative pointed out that past measures, while leading to improvements in certain areas, had not brought about a real and sustained reduction in violence against women in German society. The current plan had been drawn up as a comprehensive overall concept, involving all authorities and NGOs dealing with violence against women. Since the plan applied to areas within the jurisdiction of the *Laender* and municipalities, a working group would be set up to foster cooperation between the federal Government and the *Laender*, with the inclusion of NGOs. The plan focused on a number of areas, including prevention, with attention to the particular situation of disabled women and girls, older women and foreign women and girls; legislation, with particular attention to improving the protection of women victims of domestic violence under civil law, combating sexual harassment in the workplace and fighting trafficking in women; cooperation among institutions and projects, with working groups being set up on trafficking in women and on domestic violence; nationwide networking of assistance services; work with offenders, in particular through rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators; awareness-building among experts and the public at large; and international cooperation.

293. The representative drew attention to several areas where progress had been made or where there was an acute need for action. A first comprehensive study had been commissioned to assess the health situation of German women. Rural women benefited from a number of projects to support structural change in rural regions. The sixth report on families had, for the first time, examined the situation of foreign families in Germany, and a representative study would be commissioned soon to assess the living situation and social integration of foreign women and girls. That report was expected to serve as basis for further measures in this area. The entry into force of the new law on nationality on 1 January 2000 also benefited foreign women and their children.

294. In conclusion, the representative noted that the many initiatives undertaken by the current federal Government needed to be translated into practice in the coming years. They would further the achievement of real equality for women and men and serve to implement the Convention more effectively than in the past.

Concluding comments by the Committee

Introduction

295. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Germany for submitting a detailed combined second and third periodic report, as well as a fourth periodic report containing data disaggregated by sex, and following the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports. It commends the Government for the comprehensive written replies to the Committee's questions and its oral presentation, which provided additional information on recent developments in the State party. It appreciates the open manner in which the State party shared with the Committee its analysis of the situation of women and identified areas for further progress.

296. The Committee commends the Government of Germany for having sent a large delegation with a broad range of expertise, which was headed by the Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Their participation enhanced the quality of the constructive dialogue between the State party and the Committee. The Committee notes that the reports also refer to steps taken by the Government to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

Positive aspects

297. The Committee commends the Government on its commitment to achieving equal rights and equal opportunities for women, reflected in the progress made in the implementation of the Convention since the consideration of the initial report in 1990. The Committee welcomes the steps taken by the Government following Germany's reunification to support the many adjustments required from the people, especially the women, of the former German Democratic Republic in the transition to an economic and social system based on parliamentary democracy, federalism and the social market economy.

298. The Committee welcomes the amendment of article 3 of the Basic Law, which adds the State's commitment to the promotion of women's de facto equality with men and the removal of existing disadvantages to the constitutional guarantee of equal rights of women and men.

299. The Committee commends the Government on its wide-ranging legislative and policy initiatives, and the

programmes and projects aimed at giving effect to the constitutional guarantee of equal rights of women and men. In particular, it welcomes the adoption of the second Equal Rights Act of 1994, the amendment of the Penal Law, making marital rape and sexual coercion a punishable offence, and the action plan to combat violence against women. It commends the Government on its women and work programme aimed at ensuring women's equal participation in all sectors of society. It welcomes the Government's extensive use of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention, for the realization of de facto equality for women.

300. The Committee commends the Government on the recent advances made in the participation of women in the political sphere, particularly with respect to the representation of women in the Parliament.

301. The Committee commends the State party on the extensive network of institutional mechanisms at federal, state and local levels that support and promote the implementation of the country's equal rights policies. It appreciates the fact that resources for the Federal Ministry aimed at realizing equal opportunities for women have increased continuously between 1986 and 1997.

302. The Committee congratulates the State party for having signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, on 10 December 1999, and welcomes its stated intention to initiate in 2000 the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol and the amendment of article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time.

303. The Committee notes that the Government, in assessing the implication of a decision of the European Court of Justice concerning the role of women in the German Armed Forces, will evaluate its reservation to article 7 (b) of the Convention.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

304. The Committee notes that there are no significant factors or difficulties that prevent the effective implementation of the Convention in Germany.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

305. The Committee, while noting the wealth of information concerning legislation, policy and specific measures designed to ensure compliance with the Convention, is nonetheless concerned at the general absence of assessment and evaluation of these initiatives.

306. The Committee urges the State party to place greater emphasis, in its next periodic report, on the assessment and evaluation of all measures taken to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of their lives, and to set time-frames within which it intends to achieve its goals.

307. The Committee is concerned that, although a series of measures has been adopted, the implementation of the Convention for women living in the new *Laender* continues to lag behind that with regard to those living in the old *Laender*. It is concerned that women in the new *Laender* used to enjoy full employment but now account for 20.7 per cent of the unemployed. That is a disproportionately high percentage compared to that of unemployed men in the new *Laender* as well as to the overall unemployment rate of women in Germany.

308. The Committee urges the Government to continue its targeted efforts to improve the situation of women in the new *Laender* in the area of work and employment, as well as their overall social well-being.

309. The Committee is concerned that the programmes, laws and policies introduced by the Government have failed to ensure that the Constitutional obligation to promote the implementation of de facto equality for women is understood as a societal responsibility and achieved in practice.

310. The Committee urges the Government to take measures to ensure that public officials, including law enforcement officials, contribute to the realization of this principle in the entire territory of the country. It urges the Government to ensure that tertiary and continuing legal education of lawyers and the judiciary adequately covers the evolving understanding of equality and non-discrimination and international norms and standards in that regard. It also urges the Government to ensure the availability of effective domestic remedies and their accessibility to women,

especially in the light of the pending entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. It also encourages the Government to refer directly to the Convention in its legislative, policy and programmatic initiatives since the Convention is legally binding and such use would increase awareness of the international commitments entered into by the State party.

311. The Committee expresses its concern at the continuing disadvantages women face in many aspects of work and the economy. In particular, the Committee is concerned at the persistence of the wage gap between women and men, notwithstanding women's high educational achievements, with women earning on average 77 per cent of men's earnings. It is concerned that, in 1997, although women accounted for 42.1 per cent of the gainfully employed population, they comprised 88 per cent of the persons working in part-time employment and 55.9 per cent of the unemployed. The Committee is concerned that those differences are indicative of the persistence of indirect discrimination against women in the labour market. It is also concerned that part-time work tends to be in low-skilled employment, offering fewer opportunities for professional advancement.

312. The Committee calls on the Government to ensure that the definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention, in particular the Convention's prohibition of indirect discrimination, is fully integrated into its legislation, especially its labour legislation. In this regard, it welcomes the Government's intention to prepare a report on equal pay which will examine the primary causes of wage discrimination. The Committee calls on the State party to examine existing formulae for the determination of equal work and work of equal value, with a view to developing guidelines or directives to assist the partners in collective wage bargaining in determining comparable wage structures in sectors dominated by women. The Committee urges the Government to monitor closely the impact of its new programme on women and work so as to ensure that it achieves its stated aims of advancing equal opportunities of women and men in the working world and in the family and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

313. The Committee expresses its concern at the persistence of stereotypical and traditional attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in private and in public life. The Committee notes that that persistence is reflected in women's predominance in part-time work, their main responsibility for family and caring work, occupational segregation, men's extremely low participation in parental leave, at 1.5 per cent of those taking parental leave in 1997, and the taxation of married couples. The Committee is concerned that measures aimed at the reconciliation of family and work entrench stereotypical expectations for women and men. In that regard, the Committee is concerned at the unmet need for kindergarten places for the 0-3 age group, that the proportion of all-day kindergartens was only 34.8 per cent in 1994 and that childcare centres were available for only 5.1 per cent of school-age children, especially since all-day schools are the exception in Germany.

314. The Committee urges the Government to study the impact of measures aimed at reconciliation of work and family responsibilities so as to create a firm basis for policies and programmes that will accelerate change and eradicate stereotypical attitudes. The Committee urges the State party to develop more programmes and policies targeted at men to accelerate the changing of attitudes and behaviour. It calls on the State party to consider the introduction of non-transferable parental leave for fathers to increase the number of men that share responsibility for childcare and child-rearing. It urges the Government to improve the availability of care places for school-age children to facilitate women's re-entry into the labour market. It also recommends that the State party assess the current legal provisions on the taxation of married couples ("splitting") and its impact on the perpetuation of stereotypical expectations for married women.

315. The Committee is concerned at the limited efforts and measures in place to extend women's equal rights and equal opportunities into the private sector.

316. The Committee calls on the Government to increase its legislative and regulatory efforts to ensure that women are protected against all forms of discrimination in the private sector and to increase measures aimed at achieving de facto equality. It also encourages the Government to intensify its interaction with the private sector, including through incentives and other non-legislative measures, as well as with unions and with women's organizations to achieve that goal.

317. The Committee is concerned at the often precarious social and economic situation of foreign women living in Germany. It is also concerned at the

incidences of xenophobic and racist attacks in the State party and notes the vulnerabilities that foreign women can face on the multiple grounds of sex, ethnicity and race.

318. Noting the Government's intention to commission a study on the living situation and social integration of foreign women and girls, the Committee requests the Government to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the situation of foreign women, including their access to education and training, work and work-related benefits, health care and social protection, and to provide such information in its next report. The Committee calls on the Government to improve the collection of data and statistics disaggregated by sex and race/ethnicity of victims of violence motivated by xenophobia and racism, to put in place adequate protection mechanisms and to ensure that foreign women victims of such attacks are made aware of their rights and have access to effective remedies. It also urges the Government to strengthen its efforts for the social integration of foreign women through educational and employment services, and through awareness-raising of the population. It also recommends that steps be taken to combat domestic violence and violence within the family and to increase foreign women's awareness about the availability of legal remedies and means of social protection.

319. The Committee, while welcoming the Government's action plan on violence against women, is concerned at the remaining gaps in protecting women against violence in the family and in society.

320. The Committee urges the Government to ensure the systematic implementation of the plan and to monitor its impact in the areas of emphasis identified in the plan. In particular, the Committee recommends legislation and measures to ensure that women victims of domestic violence have immediate means of redress and protection. It also calls on the Government to take measures aimed at creating zero tolerance for such violence, and to make it socially and morally unacceptable. The Committee further recommends that measures be taken to sensitize the judiciary to all forms of violence against women that constitute infringements of the human rights of women under the Convention, particularly taking into account the increased vulnerability of foreign women to such violence.

321. The Committee is concerned at the incidence of trafficking in women and girls.

322. The Committee urges the Government to recognize that trafficked women are victims of human rights violations in need of protection and, accordingly, to provide assistance to them. It also urges the Government to increase efforts of cross-border and international cooperation, especially with countries of origin and transit, to reduce the incidence of trafficking and to prosecute traffickers. It calls on the Government to ensure that trafficked women have the support that they need so that they can provide testimony against their traffickers. It also urges that training of border police and law enforcement officials provide them with the requisite skills to recognize and provide support to victims of trafficking. It also recommends that the Government review its procedures for issuance of visas to dependent spouses taking into consideration that such spouses may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

323. The Committee is concerned at the continuing stereotypical portrayal of women, especially of foreign women, in the media.

324. The Committee urges the Government to support the important role of the media in changing stereotypical attitudes to women. It recommends that opportunities be created for the portrayal of positive, non-traditional images of women and to encourage and facilitate the use of self-regulatory mechanisms in the media to reduce discriminatory and stereotypical portrayals of women.

325. The Committee is concerned that, although they are legally obliged to pay taxes, prostitutes still do not enjoy the protection of labour and social law.

326. The Committee recommends that the Government improve the legislative situation affecting these women so as to render them less vulnerable to exploitation and increase their social protection.

327. Noting the Government's intention to amend the Aliens Act on the legal status of foreign spouses, the Committee is concerned at the situation of alien women seeking residence in the State party.

328. The Committee urges the Government to continue to improve the legislative and social protection of alien women, especially of women asylum seekers.

329. The Committee urges the Government to deposit its instrument of acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention as soon as possible.

330. The Committee also urges the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

331. The Committee requests that the Government respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in these concluding comments.

332. The Committee also requests that the Government engage in a broad consultative process with women's NGOs, including those that represent foreign women, when preparing its next report.

333. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Germany of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Germany, particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality for women and the future steps that are required in that regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

6. Third periodic reports

Belarus

334. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Belarus (CEDAW/C/BLR/3) at its 460th and 461st meetings, on 28 January 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.460 and 461).

Introduction by the State party

335. In introducing the third report, the representative of Belarus noted that since the submission of the second periodic report in 1992 significant changes had occurred for women in Belarus in the context of economic and social transition. She emphasized the positive impact in Belarus of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and her country's elaboration and implementation of a national action plan for the period 1996-2000. She also noted the importance of implementing the Convention and other international documents and events addressing issues of equality between women and men and indicated that the Government intended to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Particular attention had been given to the areas of labour, decision-making, family and social protection, health, education, prevailing gender stereotypes and violence against women. Nonetheless, many obstacles related to the transition, and the insufficient understanding of gender issues by society had hampered efforts to achieve full equality between women and men and the implementation of the Convention.

336. Many legislative and policy changes had occurred and new alliances had been forged or strengthened between the Government, local authorities, the Parliament, women's groups, civil society and international organizations. Centres offering training and curricula in gender and women's studies had been created. The collection of gender-sensitive information and data had improved and numerous publications, awareness-raising campaigns and seminars had contributed to greater visibility and better understanding of gender equality issues by the public.

337. Violence against women had been recognized as a social problem. The 1997 Penal Code addressed violence against women in all its forms and included provisions relating to the protection of victims, witnesses and their families. In 1998, the first women's crisis centre had been established and awareness-raising campaigns, the provision of information and the publication of studies had been initiated. A forthcoming criminal code would strengthen regulations and penalties in cases of trafficking in persons, violations of equal rights of citizens and all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and direct and indirect violence.

338. The representative stated that women's political participation at the highest decision-making levels remained low, with 4.5 per cent women in the national Parliament, only one woman cabinet minister and two women ambassadors, despite the attention given to the issue by policy makers. She noted that women's participation at the higher levels of administration, management, the judiciary and in local parliaments had increased, with the number of women reaching 37 per cent on average.

339. The representative noted that the difficulties of transition, including declining living standards and increasing daily workloads, as well as the aftermath of the disaster in Chernobyl, had had a negative impact on the health status of women and children. However,

health care and medical institutions in all areas had been strengthened, with particular attention being given to prenatal, childbirth and childcare-related services and the provision of medication. Advice to mothers, including awareness campaigns to promote breastfeeding, was also provided. A national plan focusing on reproductive health, including family planning, was being developed. Special legal regulations, policies and programmes had been instituted to provide assistance to the victims of the Chernobyl disaster, including medical advice to pregnant women and mothers.

340. The restructuring of the economy, changes in the labour market and budgetary cuts in the social sphere, combined with the prevailing unequal distribution of domestic tasks between women and men, had been having a negative impact on women, who were among the most vulnerable social groups. There were cases when women were the first to be fired and the last to be hired in the changing labour market. Living standards, in particular for single mothers, women in low-income families, women with disabilities and elderly women had decreased. Training courses in non-traditional areas such as management, marketing and auditing had been introduced to redress these factors and women also received financial and in-kind assistance. Newly created jobs often included quotas for women and vulnerable groups and women occupied more than half of the 20,000 work places created in 1999. Special protective provisions were in place for pregnant women workers, women with children below 3 years of age and single mothers with children between the ages of 3 and 14. Cases of discrimination against female workers and of non-compliance with labour regulations by employers had been addressed through conciliatory means, or — in one third of the cases — in the courts.

341. The economic and social transition had been particularly difficult for rural women, whose living conditions, in general, were more difficult than those of women living in urban areas. Rural women's share of unremunerated work at home and on the farm was higher. Despite efforts to modernize agriculture and village infrastructures and to ensure proper educational, health and social services to women, progress remained insufficient.

342. Increased attention had been paid to women's roles as mothers and to the family and its needs, so as to increase its protection. Changes in legislation had brought assistance to families, in particular to single mothers with children. These included: additional financial resources for single mothers with a child below 18 months of age or a disabled child below 16 years; and assistance in kind to families with children with special needs, families with numerous children and children with HIV/AIDS. In view of the high rate of divorce affecting one family in two the diminishing number of marriages and high number of orphans, legislative and policy measures had also addressed the needs of young families, education for family life, reconciliation of work and family life, social support services, human rights, including women's and children's rights, and the situation of orphans. Family-oriented policies, however, had been criticized by some feminist groups on the grounds that they overemphasized women's traditional roles in the family and weakened their position in the labour market, rather than supporting equal division of responsibilities between women and men in all spheres of life.

343. The representative informed the Committee that the creation of national machinery for the advancement of women had been recognized as a critical element for the implementation of gender and women-specific programmes and for meeting international commitments. The representative acknowledged that while Belarus still lacked sufficient financial resources, skills and public awareness to create fully functioning machinery, elements were currently in place in various sectors of the Government and in Parliament. It was responsible for data collection, development of indicators, monitoring the implementation of governmental policies and the elaboration of measures of assistance for women and children.

344. Among the practical steps taken by the Government to improve the situation of women were special programmes for gender education, practical activities for the elimination of violence against women, as well as close cooperation with UNDP, UNICEF, and NGOs in the field of gender issues.

Concluding comments by the Committee

Introduction

345. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Belarus for submitting its third periodic report, which follows the Committee's guidelines and provided data disaggregated by sex. It notes the Government's efforts to provide written replies to the Committee's questions which provided additional

information on the current situation of women in Belarus and the status of implementation of the Convention and of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

346. The Committee commends the Government of Belarus for having sent a delegation headed by the Deputy Minister of Justice and including officials from the national machinery for the advancement of women. The Committee welcomes the open and constructive dialogue established between the State party and the Committee, which enabled the Committee to obtain a better understanding of the present situation of women in Belarus.

Positive aspects

347. The Committee commends the Government for the adoption, in 1996, of a national plan of action to improve the situation of women for the period 1996-2000 and of a national programme entitled "Women of the Republic of Belarus".

348. The Committee welcomes the efforts made to establish a national machinery for the advancement of women and to achieve equality between women and men. It appreciates the work undertaken by the Administration of Family and Gender Issues Section of the Ministry of Social Welfare and by the Centre for Gender Information and Policy, which has been created within the framework of a project on women in the development process.

349. The Committee commends the Government for recognizing violence against women as a societal problem and for initiating legislation, establishing a crisis centre for victims of sexual and domestic violence and starting awareness-raising activities. It also commends the Government for recognizing trafficking in women as an emerging problem, requiring sustained attention.

350. The Committee notes that human rights education has been introduced into curricula, including teaching on the human rights of women. It also notes that gender education is being introduced at tertiary educational institutions.

351. The Committee commends the Government for recognizing the difficult economic situation women face in Belarus, in particular with regard to women's employment and the incidence of poverty among women. It also commends the efforts undertaken by the Government to alleviate the situation.

352. The Committee notes the Government's attempts to deal with the health impact of the Chernobyl disaster.

353. The Committee welcomes the Government's intention to sign, at an early date, the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

354. The Committee considers that the negative effects of the ongoing transition of the country to a market-based economy and the resulting levels of women's unemployment and poverty are major impediments to the full implementation of the Convention.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

355. The Committee is concerned that the absence of an enabling environment in the country prevents women from fully participating in all aspects of public life in accordance with articles 3, 7 and 8 of the Convention. The Committee is in particular concerned at the small number of women holding political and decision-making positions.

356. The Committee recommends that the Government take all necessary steps to ensure an open and enabling environment where women have equal opportunity to express their opinions and to participate equally in all aspects of the political process and in civil society organizations. The Committee notes that such an environment is necessary for the advancement of women and the full implementation of the Convention.

357. The Committee expresses its concern that no unified State policy is in place to eliminate discrimination against women and achieve equality between women and men. In particular, the Committee notes with concern that the Government predominantly uses an approach of service delivery to women rather than a human rights approach when implementing the Convention. In addition, such an approach emphasizes the protection of and the delivery of services to women mainly as mothers and members of families, thus perpetuating stereotypical attitudes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women.

358. The Committee urges the Government to reassess its overall policy towards women in a manner that recognizes women as individuals entitled to the realization of their human rights in accordance with the Convention. It calls on the Government, in its new national action plan to improve the situation of women in Belarus 2001-2005, to take a human-rights-oriented approach. It also urges the Government to ensure that its gender equality efforts target men as well as women.

359. The Committee expresses its concern that the country's legislation, in particular with regard to women's role in the labour market, appears to be overly protective of women as mothers and thus creates further obstacles to women's participation in the labour market.

360. The Committee calls on the Government to undertake a comprehensive legislative review so as to ensure that the full meaning of article 1 of the Convention is reflected in the country's Constitution and legislation. The Committee further urges the Government to create adequate remedies for women to obtain easy redress from direct and indirect discrimination, especially in the area of employment. It also calls on the Government to improve women's access to such remedies, including access to courts, by facilitating legal aid to women and embarking on legal literacy campaigns.

361. The Committee is concerned by the continuing prevalence of sex-role stereotypes and by the reintroduction of such symbols as a Mothers' Day and a Mothers' Award, which it sees as encouraging women's traditional roles. It is also concerned whether the introduction of human rights and gender education aimed at countering such stereotyping is being effectively implemented.

362. The Committee recommends the training of teachers to strengthen capacity for human rights education in schools. It also recommends monitoring human rights education and gender studies with regard to the number of educational establishments offering such education, and also the impact of such education.

363. The Committee is concerned at the limited capacity of the national machinery to develop and support the implementation of a national gender equality policy to accelerate the implementation of the Convention.

364. The Committee urges the Government to strengthen the status, the human and financial resources as well as the capacity of the national machinery to gather and analyse data and information and to develop legislative and policy proposals in all areas covered by the Convention.

365. The Committee is concerned at the economic situation of women, which is characterized by poverty and unemployment, displacement of women from the labour market and even from sectors previously dominated by women. The Committee also notes with concern that re-employed women hold positions below their levels of education and skills. The Committee is also concerned that women are employed predominantly in low paying jobs and that a wage gap between women and men persists. The Committee expresses its concern at the economic situation of particularly vulnerable groups of women, such as those with sole responsibility for families, older women and women with disabilities.

366. The Committee urges the Government to establish a legislative basis that ensures women equal access to the labour market and equal opportunities to work and to create protection against direct and indirect discrimination with regard to access and opportunities. It calls on the Government to implement unemployment policies targeted at women. In particular, it recommends measures to facilitate women's entry into growth sectors of the economy rather than into traditionally female-dominated employment. It calls on the Government to support women's entrepreneurship through the creation of a conducive legislative and regulatory environment and access to loans and credit.

367. The Committee is concerned that poverty is widespread among women.

368. The Committee calls on the Government to collect data and information on women living in poverty, disaggregated by age and according to urban and rural areas, to develop targeted policies and support services, and make efforts to prevent more women from falling below the poverty line.

369. The Committee is concerned that, although some efforts have been made, there is no holistic approach to preventing and eliminating violence against women, and punishing perpetrators.

370. The Committee calls on the Government to assess the impact of measures already taken to address the incidence of violence against women. It recommends addressing the root causes of violence against women, especially domestic violence, so as to improve the effectiveness of legislation, policies and programmes aimed at combating such violence. It also recommends that the legislation on violence against women be reviewed and strengthened. It further recommends that the Government put in place immediate means of redress and increase psychological counselling for victims, including for those women who are serving prison sentences. The Committee urges the Government to implement training and sensitization programmes for the judiciary, law enforcement officials and members of the legal profession, as well as awareness-raising measures to create zero tolerance in society with regard to violence against women.

371. The Committee expresses its concern about the increasing trend in trafficking for purposes of prostitution of Belarusian women, often under false pretences.

372. The Committee encourages the Government to increase its efforts, including through international and cross-border cooperation with recipient and transit countries, to prevent trafficking in women, attack its root causes through poverty alleviation and assist its victims through efforts of counselling and reintegration.

373. The Committee expresses its concern with regard to women's health throughout the life cycle.

374. The Committee urges the Government to maintain adequate and affordable physical and mental health services for women throughout their life cycle, including for older women. In particular, the Committee urges the Government to increase affordable contraceptive choices for women and men so as to increase the use of contraception. It also urges the Government to review its occupational health and safety legislation and standards, with a view to reducing protective standards, which often have a discriminatory effect on women in general and pregnant women in particular. It further recommends the collection of data on illnesses affecting women more than men and the monitoring of HIV/AIDS prevalence among women. The Committee also recommends further efforts by the Government to address the effects on women and children of the Chernobyl disaster availing itself of international humanitarian assistance.

375. The Committee encourages the Government to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time.

376. The Committee encourages the Government to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

377. The Committee requests that the Government respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in these concluding comments. It also requests the Government to improve the collection and analysis of data and statistics disaggregated by sex and age in the areas of poverty, violence against women, and relating to articles 10, 11, 12 and 14 of the Convention, and to provide them in the next report. It further requests the Government, in its next report, to provide an assessment of the impact of measures taken to implement the Convention.

378. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Belarus of the present concluding comments, in order to make the people of Belarus, particularly Government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality for women and the future steps required in that regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

Luxembourg

379. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Luxembourg (CEDAW/C/LUX/3 and CEDAW/C/LUX/3/Add.1) at its 446th and 447th meetings, on 17 January 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.446 and 447).

Introduction by the State party

380. In introducing the third periodic report, the representative drew attention to follow-up steps taken after the Committee's consideration of the second periodic report in 1997, which included wide distribution of the concluding comments, a discussion on equality between women and men in relation to the

Committee's recommendations in the Parliamentary Commission on Equality of Opportunity Between Women and Men and on the Advancement of Women of the Chamber of Deputies, and press coverage. The National Council of Women of Luxembourg endorsed the Committee's recommendations and underlined the importance of this international monitoring mechanism for achieving progress in the status of women in Luxembourg.

381. The Government had adopted an action plan 2000 for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women had reissued its publication entitled "Equal rights for girls and boys, for women and men", covering the Convention and actions to implement it in Luxembourg. The collection of statistics disaggregated by sex had also been improved.

382. The representative stressed the importance of maintaining the present institutional mechanism for the implementation of policies for the advancement of women and for gender equality in order to guarantee implementation of the Convention, and of a gender equality policy, as called for in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. Since the creation of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women in 1995, the Government of Luxembourg had pursued an active policy for the promotion of women's equality. The new coalition Government, in power since August 1999, accorded priority to a policy of the promotion of the status of women. There were four women ministers in the new Government, out of a total of 14 ministers. The budget of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, while small, had increased by 33.75 per cent in five years, and the Ministry supported the recent proposal made by the National Council of Women of Luxembourg to conduct a gender analysis of the entire budget of the Government.

383. With regard to Luxembourg's two reservations to the Convention, the representative noted that the Government remained committed to working towards their withdrawal. The Government's proposal to amend article 3 of the Constitution on the hereditary transmission of the crown, which is supported by the Grand Duke, is still being pursued. The representative did not foresee any action during the present legislative period on the reservation to article 16 on the choice of a child's surname, the existing legislation did not include any provision on the imposing of another family name. The practice of children carrying their fathers' names was strongly rooted in the culture of the country.

384. The representative underlined the Government's support for the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which it had signed on 10 December 1999, and hoped to be among the first to ratify.

385. The representative drew attention to the Government's policy of consciousness-raising concerning the changing roles and responsibilities of women and men. Among actions taken was a project on "sharing equality", which had developed a pedagogic gender approach. A working group was preparing a project to integrate gender equality aspects into all basic and continuing education curricula. Teaching and training materials and manuals had also been developed, and NGO activities had been supported. A second strategic focus was the integration of a gender perspective into all policies, with an emphasis on legislation. Since September 1998, all legislation must be accompanied by a statement on its impact on equality of opportunity. The introduction of non-transferable parental leave as of 1 January 1999 was an example of legislative action aimed at changing roles.

386. The representative noted that women make up 37 per cent of the economically active population, with frontier workers from neighbouring countries constituting about one third of the female labour force. The traditional family, with the father being the head of the household and working outside the home and the mother responsible for the home and social relations, remained well anchored in Luxembourg society. At the same time, there was growing demand for improved childcare and continuing education, especially from women under 45 years of age who intended to leave the job market only temporarily for family responsibilities. Legislation had been adopted that created the basis for positive action for women in the private sector and the Ministry had supported several projects in this area. Gender equality officers were now mandatory in the private sector and revision of the Civil Service Statute was planned, with a view to introducing positive action in the public sector. The present coalition Government had declared itself against the introduction of quotas on electoral lists.

387. The representative indicated that 1999 had been designated the national year against violence against women, during which extensive public awareness campaigns had been implemented to sensitize the

public to the issue of domestic and marital violence. Training would continue to be offered for service providers in women's shelters, legislation on domestic violence would be further reviewed, and the experience of other countries with such legislation would be studied to sensitize further various ministries and the judiciary to this issue. Action on a law against sexual harassment in the workplace was expected.

388. A special commission on women had been created within the National Commission on Foreigners to better the integration of foreign women into society. The results of this initiative would be presented in the next report.

389. In conclusion, the representative acknowledged that further progress was necessary in all areas to change traditions and cultural attitudes on the roles and responsibilities of men. Efforts were needed to ensure the participation of men in changing gender relations and to achieve equality between women and men. In this context, Luxembourg had proposed to organize a conference on "Men and power". The representative also expressed the hope that the special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the Beijing Conference in June 2000, would deal with this issue.

Concluding comments by the Committee

Introduction

390. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Luxembourg for submitting a detailed third periodic report containing data disaggregated by sex. It commends the Government for the comprehensive written replies to the Committee's questions and its oral presentation that further clarified recent developments and Government policy in the State party. It appreciates the frank and open manner in which the report was prepared and presented, and the fact that the views of NGOs had been sought for the report.

391. The Committee commends the Government of Luxembourg for sending a high-level delegation, headed by the Minister for the Advancement of Women. The Committee notes that the report and the replies refer to steps taken by the Government to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

Positive aspects

392. The Committee commends the Government for the wide dissemination of the Convention and of the concluding comments adopted by the Committee following consideration of the State party's second periodic report in 1997. The Committee welcomes the signing by the State party, on 10 December 1999, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and its stated intention to work actively towards its speedy ratification.

393. The Committee commends the Government for maintaining a separate Ministry for the Advancement of Women and its intention to continue this institutional arrangement. It welcomes the Ministry's interest in, and support for, proposals to conduct a gender analysis of the entire State budget. This will contribute to a better understanding of the way in which women and men benefit from governmental expenditures in all areas. The Committee welcomes the Government's strategic approach to the realization of equality between women and men, which includes awareness-raising about the changing roles and responsibilities of women and men, on the one hand, and the systematic integration of a gender equality perspective into all policies, on the other.

394. The Committee welcomes the law of May 1999 that strengthened measures against trafficking in humans and the sexual exploitation of children and, in particular, extended Luxembourg law to cover all sexual crimes or misdemeanours committed abroad by citizens of Luxembourg.

395. The Committee commends the Government for its efforts to teach equality, in particular through its project entitled "*Partageons l'égalité-Glaichheet delen-Gleichheit teilen*" (sharing equality), which aims at promoting equality of opportunity between girls and boys from the pre-school stage, by integrating the equality principle in the training curricula of teachers and trainers, including the development of training manuals and modules.

396. The Committee welcomes the legislation of July 1998 requiring the appointment of equality officers in enterprises with at least 15 employees. It also welcomes the entry into force, as of 1 January 1999, of the law on implementation of the national action plan on employment, which introduced the right to non-transferable parental leave of six months for every parent, covered by State benefits.

397. The Committee also welcomes the fact that the same law of July 1998 now provides the legal basis for instituting affirmative action for women in the private sector.

398. The Committee welcomes the efforts already undertaken and the intention to expand the collection of data disaggregated by sex to develop a solid basis for further legislative and policy initiatives, *inter alia*, with regard to disadvantaged groups of women such as immigrant women.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

399. The Committee notes that there are no significant factors or difficulties that prevent the effective implementation of the Convention in Luxembourg.

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

400. The Committee notes with concern the failure of the State party to amend the Constitution to include the principle of equality between women and men. This is not only a failure to comply with the State party's specific obligations under article 2 of the Convention, but with international human rights law in general. In this regard, the Committee notes that this concern had already been raised during consideration of Luxembourg's second periodic report in 1997 and that, in a subsequent motion, the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg undertook to complete such an amendment as a matter of priority.

401. The Committee recommends that the Government undertake as a matter of urgency all necessary steps to facilitate the amendment of the Constitution to bring it in line with article 2 of the Convention. Once the Constitution is amended, the Committee recommends that a time-frame be set to review all legislation so as to bring it into compliance with the newly amended Constitution. The Committee underlines the importance of such legislative review to highlight the significance of the Constitutional amendment on equality between women and men, and to ensure effective domestic remedies. The Committee notes the crucial importance of such effective remedies in light of the pending entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

402. The Committee is concerned that, notwithstanding the Government's stated commitment in its action plan 2000 to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, no further progress has been made in withdrawing the reservations concerning articles 7 (hereditary transmission of the crown to the oldest male) and 16 (g) (right to choose the family name of children). With regard to the latter, the Committee expresses its concern at the lack of governmental commitment to working towards influencing cultural traditions and attitudes which would allow for a withdrawal of the reservation.

403. The Committee urges the Government to take action towards the amendment of article 3 of the Constitution in light of the consent of the Grand Duke to such an amendment. The Committee also calls on the Government to undertake awareness-raising and education campaigns to overcome traditional and stereotypical images of women and men so as to enable it to withdraw its reservation under article 16.

404. The Committee is concerned at the persistence of traditional and stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in public and in private life. These attitudes are reflected in people's behaviour and in legislation and policy, and limit women's full enjoyment of all their rights guaranteed under the Convention.

405. The Committee urges the Government to intensify its awareness-raising efforts, supported by legislation, policy and specific projects, to overcome such attitudes, so as to emphasize women's and men's shared family responsibilities and the importance of women's full participation in public and economic life.

406. The Committee expresses its concern that certain laws, for example, the waiting period of 300 days before a widow or divorced woman can remarry, and the legislation governing abortions, appear anachronistic in a country like Luxembourg. The Committee is concerned, in particular, that the Government appears to lack the commitment to review and adapt this legislation to changing attitudes and developments in the European region.

407. The Committee urges the Government to provide the necessary leadership and to develop a comprehensive legislative agenda to amend such laws.

408. The Committee expresses concern at the lack of equality of opportunity of women in the labour market, as expressed in the relatively low percentage of women in the labour force (37 per cent of the active

population), the wage gap between women and men, the higher number of women in part-time work, the ongoing segregation of the labour market and the stereotypical attitudes that tend to portray men as heads of households and breadwinners and women primarily as mothers and homemakers. The Committee is also concerned that there is insufficient understanding of the structural causes that perpetuate the wage gap, as women's work remains undervalued compared with men's work.

409. The Committee calls on the Government to undertake studies on the causes of the wage gap to improve the factual basis for labour negotiations where collective wages are set. It also urges the Government to analyse the projects now under way to broaden women's participation in the labour market so that the findings can be used for the development of comprehensive policies and legislation to secure the gains made by women in this area.

410. The Committee is concerned that, although adoption of a law on sexual harassment in the workplace is expected to take place soon, there is still no specific legislation on domestic violence.

411. The Committee urges the Government to develop a policy and legislation to prevent and eliminate domestic violence, and sexual violence, including rape, against women and girls, and to prosecute violators. The Committee calls on the State party to collect statistics on the incidence of domestic violence, and comprehensive information on the impact of measures against domestic violence. The Committee also recommends that the Government gather further information on the impact of the law on trafficking in humans and the sexual exploitation of children.

412. The Committee asks the Government to provide, in its next report, detailed information on article 12, women and health, taking into consideration the Committee's general recommendation 24. Such information should include data on female smokers and smoking-related diseases.

413. The Committee urges the Government to deposit its instrument of acceptance to the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention, on the Committee's meeting time, as soon as possible.

414. The Committee also urges the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

415. The Committee requests that the Government respond in its next periodic report to the specific issues raised in these concluding comments.

416. The Committee requests the wide dissemination in Luxembourg of the present concluding comments, in order to make the people of Luxembourg, and particularly government administrators and politicians, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and de facto equality for women and the future steps that are required in that regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, and in particular to women's and human rights organizations, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

Chapter V
Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

417. The Committee considered ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (agenda item 6) at its 445th and 466th meetings, on 17 January and 4 February 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.445 and 466).

418. The item was introduced by the Chief of the Women's Rights Unit of the Division for the Advancement of Women, who introduced the reports of the secretariat (CEDAW/C/2000/I/4 and CEDAW/C/2000/I/5) and drew attention to a working paper on the draft rules of procedure (CEDAW/C/2000/I/WG.I/WP.1).

Action taken by the Committee under agenda item 6

1. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

419. The Committee expressed satisfaction at the adoption of the Optional Protocol by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session (resolution 54/4 of 6 October 1999) and its opening for signature, accession and ratification, and requested Silvia Cartwright to prepare a working paper containing proposals on working methods of the Committee with regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The

working paper would be discussed at the twenty-third session of the Committee.

2. Rules of procedure

420. The Committee adopted a significant part of the draft rules of procedure contained in working paper CEDAW/C/2000/I/WG.I/WP.1 and agreed to continue consideration of the remaining draft rules at its twenty-third session.

3. Overdue reports

421. The Committee requested the Secretariat to provide an analysis to be submitted to its twenty-third session of proposed approaches in cases where States parties have not submitted at least two reports required under article 18 of the Convention.

4. Members of the pre-session working group for the twenty-fourth session

422. The Committee decided that the members of the pre-session working group for the twenty-fourth session and their alternates should be:

Members

Ms. Mavivi Myabuyata-Manzini (Africa)

Ms. Rosario Manalo (Asia)

Ms. Yolanda Ferrer Gómez (Latin America and the Caribbean)

Ms. Feride Acar (Europe)

Alternates

Ms. Kongit Sinegiorgis (Africa)

Ms. Savitri Goonesckere (Asia)

Ms. Zelmira Regazzoli (Latin America and the Caribbean)

Ms. Ivanka Corti (Europe)

5. Reports to be considered at future sessions

423. The Committee decided that it would consider the following reports at its twenty-third, twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth sessions:

Twenty-third session

Initial reports

Cameroon

Lithuania

Maldives

Republic of Moldova

Third periodic reports

Iraq

Third and fourth periodic reports

Austria

Fourth periodic reports

Cuba

Romania

In the event that one of the above-mentioned States parties should be unable to present its report, the Committee will consider the initial report of Singapore.

Twenty-fourth session

Initial reports

Singapore

Uzbekistan

Second periodic reports

Netherlands

Combined second and third periodic reports

Jamaica

Third periodic reports

Egypt

Combined third and fourth periodic reports

Mongolia

Fourth periodic reports

Sweden

In the event that one of the above-mentioned States parties should be unable to present its report, the

Committee will consider the second periodic report of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya or the third and fourth periodic reports of Finland.

Twenty-fifth session

Initial reports

Kazakhstan

Second periodic reports

Guyana

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Viet Nam

Third and fourth periodic reports

Finland

Fourth periodic reports

Nicaragua

In the event that one of the above-mentioned States parties should be unable to present its report, the Committee will consider the third periodic report of Iceland or Sri Lanka.

6. Dates of the twenty-third session of the Committee

424. Consistent with the calendar of conferences for 2000, the twenty-third session should be held from 12 to 30 June 2000. The pre-session working group for the twenty-fourth session will meet from 3 to 7 July 2000.

United Nations meetings to be attended by the Chairperson or members of the Committee in 2000

425. The Committee recommended that the Chairperson or an alternate should attend the following meetings in 2000:

(a) The Commission on the Status of Women acting as preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century";

(b) The Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-sixth session;

(c) The twelfth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies;

(d) The General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session (Third Committee).

Chapter VI
Implementation of article 21 of the Convention

426. The Committee considered the implementation of article 21 of the Convention (agenda item 5) at its 445th and 466th meetings, on 17 January and 4 February 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.445 and 466).

427. The item was presented by the Chief of the Women's Rights Unit, who introduced a note by the Secretary-General on reports of the specialized agencies on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities (CEDAW/C/2000/I/3 and Add.1-4).

Action taken by the Committee under agenda item 5

1. Report on the implementation of the Platform for Action

428. The Committee requested that its report on progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action based on the review of reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention (E/CN.6/1999/PC/4) be issued by the Division for the Advancement of Women as one of the issues of "Women 2000".

2. Special session of the General Assembly on Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century

429. The Committee adopted a statement on the links between the Platform for Action and the Convention to mark the special session.

Chapter VII
Provisional agenda for the twenty-third session

430. The Committee considered the provisional agenda for its twenty-third session at its 466th meeting, on 4 February 2000 (see CEDAW/C/SR.466). The Committee decided to approve the following provisional agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the twenty-second and twenty-third sessions of the Committee.
4. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
5. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
6. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.
7. Provisional agenda of the twenty-fourth session.
8. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its twenty-third session.

Chapter VIII
Adoption of the report

431. At its 466th meeting, on 4 February 2000, the Committee adopted the report on its twenty-second session (CEDAW/C/2000/I/L.1 and CEDAW/C/2000/I/CRP.3 and Add.1-9), as orally amended.